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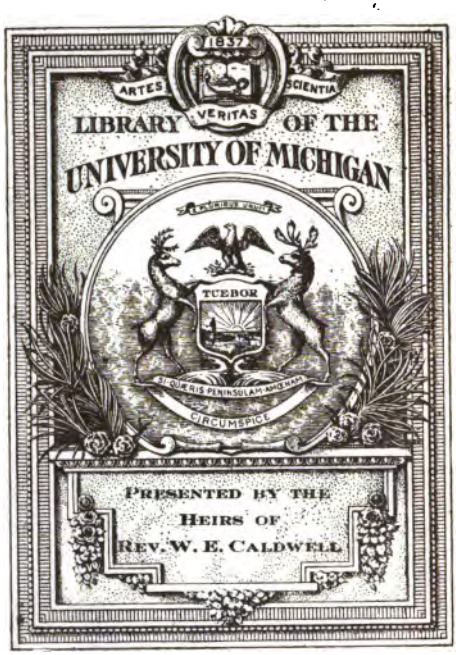

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THE

# CATASTROPHE

OF THE

# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN 1837,

INCLUDING A FULL VIEW OF THE RECENT

THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES IN NEW ENGLAND.

---

BY ZEBULON CROCKER,

DELEGATE FROM THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1837.

---

NEW HAVEN:

B. & W. NOYES.

1838.

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# PREFACE.

THE author of this work, on his return from the General Assembly of 1837, proposed to publish in a religious newspaper, a brief history of the Plan of Union, and the causes of its abrogation. He was advised, however, to adopt the pamphlet form, or make use of the pages of some periodical of a more permanent character. On proceeding to investigate the subject with this design, he found it so extensive as not to be easily compressed within the narrow limits commonly assigned to articles in religious magazines; and he finally concluded to give to the public, a small volume, in which the recent controversies in New England, should be fully exhibited. In presenting this part of the subject, two modes occurred, each of which appeared to possess peculiar advantages as well as disadvantages. The one was, to give a concise statement, entirely in his own language, of the positions maintained by different wri-

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ters in the discussion; the other was, to exhibit more fully, not only the main positions, but the arguments by which they were supported, with copious extracts from the original articles. The latter mode is the one principally pursued in this volume. While this mode is less concise than the other, and often makes it necessary to repeat the statement of the points in debate, it will be found to have an important advantage, in giving the reader an extensive acquaintance with the subject. It has not been thought advisable in all instances to denote by marks of quotation, parts of sentences and expressions, introduced from the different writers. In stating their opinions, free use has been made of their language, without particular marks to denote it.

The author has had no desire to conceal his own views on the controverted topics. Having read with attention the writings on both sides, and having in general, as he thinks, succeeded in understanding them, he has been frank to express what are his own convictions, whenever truth seemed to require him to do it. The difference, however, between the New Haven divines and their opponents, he regards as trivial, compared with the great doctrines of the gospel, all of which they hold in common; nor does

he see the least cause, on the ground of theological sentiment, for strife or alienation. In expressing his opinion of the measures of the majority of the last General Assembly, and of the opposers of New Haven in Connecticut, and in estimating the arguments of different writers, rank, and age, and influence in the church, and acknowledged worth, have not been prominently before his mind; but the quality of the measures and arguments themselves. Nor does he feel much concern respecting the manner in which this volume shall be received, by any portion of the public. He is content to know that it contains historical truth, and to believe, that it is important for the future peace and prosperity of the church, that the subjects on which he has written, should be presented in a more condensed form, than they are found in the voluminous documents, which he has been obliged to consult, in preparing this volume for the press.

Middletown, Con., April, 1838.

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# CATASTROPHE

OF THE

# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN 1837.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

Proceedings of the Assembly awaken general interest.

THE proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in 1837, have awakened an intense interest in the public mind. The transactions of no other ecclesiastical body convened in the United States, have probably excited so general attention, or called forth so strong an expression of feeling from all classes of the community, as those of that Assembly. Scarcely a man, woman, or child, in this nation, at all acquainted with passing events, has remained so indifferent a spectator of the acts in question, as not to have passed judgment upon them, and to have sympathized with one or the other of the parties in the contest. The reason is obvious. The Assembly of 1837 used its unrivaled authority in such a manner, as to affect the rights, the privile-

ges, and the opinions, of a large portion of the inhabitants of this nation. In addition to the dismemberment of its own body, it struck a blow at benevolent institutions, long cherished and highly valued by multitudes, who had made them the channel of communicating blessings to their fellow-men; and it aimed, not only to destroy existing relations in the churches under its care, but to sever the bonds of union, which, for many years, had existed between itself and other ecclesiastical bodies, as the ground of friendly intercourse and cheerful cöoperation in the work of spreading the gospel. No wonder, then, that its proceedings have caused a deep sensation in many minds; no wonder that they have agitated the mass of the people, and produced an uncommon excitement throughout the length and breadth of the land.

To the Congregational churches of New England, the measures adopted by the General Assembly of 1837 are so directly important, as to demand, on their part, a careful investigation. The acts of that body are calculated, in some degree, to embarrass and limit the operations of their benevolent societies, and deeply to affect the numerous churches already planted by their agency, and, by agreement, brought into ecclesiastical connection with the Presbyterian church. The foundation of their confidence has thus been shaken, and they are left in

suspense in regard to the proper method of prosecuting, in future, the work of domestic missions among their brethren at the west. Should these acts be persisted in and enforced, the result would be a lasting sense of injury and injustice in the hearts of those whose reliance has been misplaced, and who, in consequence, are compelled, with some disadvantage, to change their mode of action.

Intelligent Congregationalists in New England, therefore, cannot but feel a deep interest in the measures referred to; nor will they be satisfied till they have investigated the whole subject, in order to discover whether there existed any good and sufficient reasons, why these measures should be adopted.

The principal acts of the Assembly of 1837 claiming attention, are those which relate to the abrogation of the Plan of Union of 1801; the excision of the synods of Utica, Geneva, Genesee, and the Western Reserve; and the exclusion of the American Home Missionary Society and the American Education Society from the bounds of the Presbyterian church. The history of these acts is already written in detail, and so widely circulated, through the medium of the religious periodicals, as to be in the possession of the great mass of readers.

For the sake of easy reference, however, the exscinding and excluding resolutions will here be

given. The act of abrogation will be inserted in another place.

"*Resolved*, That, by the operation of the abrogation of the Plan of Union of 1801, the Synod of the Western Reserve is, and is hereby declared to be, no longer a part of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America."

"*Resolved*, That while we desire that no body of christian men of other denominations should be prevented from choosing their own plans of doing good, and while we claim no right to complain, should they exceed us in energy and zeal, we believe, that facts too familiar to need repetition here, warrant us in affirming, that the organization and operations of the so called American Home Missionary Society, and American Education Society, and its branches, of whatever name, are exceedingly injurious to the peace and purity of the Presbyterian church.

We recommend, accordingly, that they should cease to operate within any of our churches."

"*Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, That in consequence of the abrogation, by this Assembly, of the Plan of Union of 1801, between it and the General Association of Connecticut, as utterly unconstitutional, and therefore null and void from the beginning, the Synods of Utica, Gene-

Exscinding and excluding Resolutions.

va, and Genesee, which were formed and attached to this body, under and in execution of said "Plan of Union," be, and are hereby declared to be, out of the ecclesiastical connection of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, and that they are not, in form or in fact, an integral portion of said church."*

* Minutes of the Assembly of 1837, pp. 440, 442, 444.

# CHAPTER II.

## HISTORY OF THE PLAN OF UNION.

### Origin of the Plan of Union.

THE several acts of the General Assembly, which were named in the preceding chapter, are closely connected, being parts of a scheme intended to accomplish a general object. That object will be fully developed in the following pages of this work.

As the abrogation of the "Plan of Union" was a leading act, and the basis of the subsequent measures of the Assembly; and as the Congregational churches of Connecticut, especially, and those of other parts of New England, generally, are interested in the subject; this Plan, and that part of the Assembly's proceedings which relate to it, will be more particularly discussed in the former part of this volume: while the latter part will be principally devoted to an inquiry respecting the causes which have operated to produce the late catastrophe of the Presbyterian church.

To understand the origin of the Plan of Union, it is necessary to refer to the condition of the country some time previous to its adoption. Till towards the close of the last century, the western part

Settlement of the Western States.

of New York, and the States lying north of the Ohio river, were almost a wilderness without white inhabitants. The oldest town in Western New York was settled in 1784, and the first settlement in the State of Ohio was made four years later. In 1800, the population of Indiana was less than 5000, and that of Illinois was only 215.

The first settlers of Western New York and of Ohio were emigrants from New England. With them, other emigrants mingled from the southern and middle States, and from Europe. The New Englanders were mostly Congregationalists; some members of churches, and all educated in the principles and practice of their puritan ancestors. They of course carried with them to their new residences, predilections for Congregationalism; while the emigrants from regions where Presbyterianism prevailed, having imbibed views of church government according to that system, retained their attachment to the peculiarities of their own church.

On all the great doctrines of the gospel, such as are essential to salvation, Congregationalists and Presbyterians held a common faith; and the circumstances of the new settlers were calculated to mitigate sectarian feelings, and remove partialities and prejudices in regard to questions merely of order and discipline.

Still attached to the institutions of religion, but deprived of the privileges which they once enjoyed; too few and feeble to provide separately for the stated ministrations of the word, and unable by any means to procure the requisite supply of ministers; they were prepared to lay aside all contention about minor differences of opinion, and, for the general good, to unite, under a modified system of discipline, in the bonds of a common fellowship.

In the mean time, the pious relatives and friends of the emigrants, in the land of their nativity, were not unmindful of their spiritual wants. The sympathy and prayers of christians followed into the wilderness, whither they had gone, these voluntary exiles from the temples and homes of their childhood. Missionaries, both Congregational and Presbyterian, began to visit the new settlements, and to seek out, in their scattered habitations, those who were destitute of the bread of life.

The subject of missions to the new settlements engaged the attention of the General Association of Connecticut, as early as the year 1788. Previous to this time, some of the district associations had delegated individuals of their own number to labor, for the period of a few months, in the destitute regions of the West, where members of their own churches resided; and the pulpits of those delegated, during their absence, were supplied, in rotation, by

the other members of the association. This practice the General Association of 1788 approved, and recommended its continuance. In 1792, it took the subject into further consideration, and petitioned the legislature for authority to make collections annually for missions, in the congregations throughout the State. The petition was granted, and a resolve was passed, authorizing collections in the month of May, for three successive years. This resolve was several times repeated; and the contributions made in accordance with it, were, for a long time, the principal pecuniary support of this branch of the missionary enterprise.

In 1798, the General Association of Connecticut organized itself into a missionary society, the object of which was, "to christianize the heathen in North America, and to support and promote christian knowledge in the new settlements within the United States." In 1802, the trustees of the society were incorporated by the legislature of Connecticut; and under the charter then received, its operations have ever since been conducted.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, also, was early interested in the subject of domestic missions. It was not, however, till 1801, that it appointed its first standing committee on missions, and was incorporated as a missionary society, by the legislature of Pennsylvania. In its report on

the state of religion, at its session in 1801, it uses the following language. "The new settlements on our frontiers appear very desirous to have the gospel preached among them, and our missionaries who have visited them, do not appear to have labored without success. Good impressions have not unfrequently been made, and churches are rapidly forming, which will soon need settled pastors."

In this manner, missionaries were sent into the same field to preach the gospel of Christ, by two ecclesiastical bodies who agreed in doctrines essential to salvation, and, though differing in their form of government, were on terms of friendly intercourse with each other. In such a state of things, it appeared unnecessary and undesirable to form separate churches, merely on the ground of order and discipline; and those best acquainted with the subject deemed it practicable, on some plan of accommodation conformed in a measure to the predilections of both parties, to bring the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements into an amicable union.

Dr. Edwards, then president of Union College, feeling a deep interest on this subject, proposed it to the General Assembly of 1801, and, as chairman of a committee, consisting, in addition to himself, of Drs. McKnight, Woodhull, and Blatchford, late of Lansingburgh, and Mr. Hutton, a ruling elder of

The Plan of Union.

the presbytery of Troy, reported the "Plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements," which was adopted by the Assembly with great unanimity, and sent by their delegates to the General Association of Connecticut, for its acceptance. The Association agreed to the plan as proposed; and thus ratified, it became a standing regulation, between the two ecclesiastical bodies, in conducting their missionary operations.

The Plan of Union being an important document, in its connection with the history of the times, it is here inserted.

"*A Plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the New Settlements, adopted in* 1801.*

"The report of the committee appointed to consider and digest a plan of government for the churches in the new settlements, was taken up and considered; and after mature deliberation on the same, approved, as follows:

"Regulations adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in America, and by the General Association of the State of Connecticut, (provided said Association agree to them,) with a view to prevent alienation and promote union and harmony, in those new settlements which are composed of inhabitants from those bodies.

* From the Assembly's Digest, page 297.

The Plan of Union.

"1st. It is strictly enjoined on all their missionaries to the new settlements, to endeavor, by all proper means, to promote mutual forbearance and accommodation, between those inhabitants of the new settlements who hold the Presbyterian and those who hold the Congregational form of church government.

"2d. If in the new settlements, any church of the Congregational order shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, that church may, if they choose, still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles, settling their difficulties among themselves, or by a council mutually agreed upon for that purpose. But if any difficulty shall exist between the minister and the church or any member of it, it shall be referred to the presbytery to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a council consisting of an equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties.

"3d. If a Presbyterian church shall settle a minister of Congregational principles, that church may still conduct their discipline according to Presbyterian principles; excepting that if a difficulty arise between him and his church, or any member of it, the cause shall be tried by the Association, to which the said minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; otherwise by a council, one half Con-

gregationalists and the other half Presbyterians, mutually agreed on by the parties.

"4th. If any congregation consist partly of those who hold the Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form; we recommend to both parties, that this be no obstruction to their uniting in one church and settling a minister: and that in this case, the church choose a standing committee from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be, to call to account every member of the church, who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the laws of christianity, and to give judgment on such conduct: and if the person condemned by their judgment be a Presbyterian, he shall have liberty to appeal to the presbytery: if a Congregationalist, he shall have liberty to appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church: in the former case, the determination of the presbytery shall be final, unless the church consent to a further appeal to the synod, or to the General Assembly: and in the latter case, if the party condemned shall wish for a trial by a mutual council, the cause shall be referred to such council. And provided the said standing committee of any church, shall depute one of themselves to attend the presbytery, he may have the same right to sit and act in the presbytery, as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian church.

"On motion, *Resolved*, That an attested copy of the above plan be made by the stated clerk, and put into the hands of the delegates of this Assembly to the General Association, to be by them laid before that body for their consideration; and that if it should be approved by them, it go into immediate operation."

"The delegates to the last General Association of Connecticut, reported, that they all attended the Association during the whole of their sessions, and were received and treated with great cordiality and friendship:

That the regulations submitted by the last Assembly, respecting the establishment of churches in the frontiers, consisting of members partly of the Presbyterian and partly of the Congregational denominations, were unanimously adopted by the Association."

This Plan of Union is primarily an agreement or compact between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church and the General Association of Connecticut, acting as missionary societies. They stipulate, that their missionaries shall endeavor to promote forbearance and accommodation between Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the new settlements, with a view to the ultimate connec-

Plan of Union binding.

tion of the churches formed by their joint labors, with the Presbyterian church. For the better attainment of this object, they provide for the settlement of Presbyterian ministers over Congregational churches, and Congregational ministers over Presbyterian churches, leaving the churches to practice their own mode of discipline; and proposing such a method of adjusting difficulties between the pastors and churches, as would secure to each party the application, as far as practicable, of its own system of discipline. The most important stipulation, however, is that which relates to the churches composed of both Congregationalists and Presbyterians. The Assembly and Association recommend, that such churches appoint in the place of ruling elders, a standing committee, who shall issue all cases of discipline, their decision being subject to an appeal, at the option of the individual concerned, either to the presbytery or to the male communicants of the church; and who shall have the right to depute one of their number to sit and act in the presbytery as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian church.

By the terms of agreement in the Plan of Union, the General Assembly and General Association were mutually bound to each other to carry its provisions into effect, so far as they had power to do it. They were under obligation, in the first place, to instruct their missionaries "to promote forbearance and ac-

commodation," as stipulated; and then to exert their influence upon the members of their respective churches in the new settlements, to lead them to adopt the plan proposed. In fulfillment of these obligations, the General Association, acting through the trustees of the Connecticut Missionary Society, has ever instructed its missionaries to organize churches according to the articles of union, and counseled the members of Congregational churches in the new settlements to conform to these regulations. The General Assembly acted in a similar manner; and in 1806, "Resolved, that the committee of missions cause a number of copies of this plan to be printed, and delivered to the missionaries who may be sent by the Assembly among the people concerned." So far, the original parties acted with mutual good faith.

But the Plan of Union had respect to the churches in the new settlements; not, indeed, that it was binding on them without their consent; but it held out to them proposals, which, when voluntarily accepted, were the ground of rights and privileges to be conferred on them by the General Assembly. Whenever any church assents to the terms of union, and connects itself, by the attendance of one of its standing committee, with a presbytery, then it becomes subject to all the liabilities, and entitled to all the immunities, of membership in the Presbyte-

rian church. An obligation rests upon all the judicatories of the church, from the lowest to the highest, to respect the rights of this member and to treat it as a constituent part of the Presbyterian body. Every church organizing itself according to the Plan of Union, virtually becomes a third party to that compact. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church has no right to take away its privileges or membership, without its consent; nor can it do this, without both violating its solemn engagements to that church, and departing from the principles of courtesy and good faith towards the General Association of Connecticut. This latter body exerted its advisory power over Congregationalists, to induce them to become in a certain form Presbyterians, on the ground of the supposed advantages which would accrue to the churches organized in the new settlements, through the engagement of the General Assembly to receive them into connection with the Presbyterian church; and the violation of that engagement in any manner, is a wrong to the party who thus acted in view of it.

For an illustration of these positions, suppose a certain father residing in Philadelphia, undertakes to negotiate a treaty of marriage for his son, with a certain father residing in the city of Hartford, whose daughter is now absent in the state of Ohio. These parents engage to employ suitable persons to

introduce the parties to each other, and gain their consent to the union. The parent of the son enters into an agreement with the other parent, that the daughter, in case the proposed marriage is consummated, shall be received into his family, and enjoy all the rights and privileges of one of his own daughters; and particularly, in the event of her husband's death, shall continue with him and be an heir to his estate. The proposals agreed upon between the two parents are communicated to the children. They accept them and assume the marriage relation. In doing it, they become parties to an agreement by which the wife comes into possession of valuable privileges and immunities. Here, then, is a compact like that of the Plan of Union, in which two parties stipulate that other persons in whom they feel a mutual interest, shall, upon certain conditions, become entitled to certain benefits. The original parties agreed to use their influence to produce a given result, on account of the benefits that would accrue to a third party, in consequence of that result. Now suppose that the party who had stipulated to receive his daughter-in-law into his house and make her an heir to his estate, should utterly refuse to fulfill his part of the compact, and should declare the instrument by which he had bound himself, null and void. Suppose on the death of his son he should drive her from the home

that was pledged, and deprive her of the promised inheritance; what obligations would he violate? In the first place, he would violate an important obligation to the parent, who, in view of the benefits which his daughter was to derive, used his influence to procure her marriage. And in the second place, he would violate his obligations to his daughter-in-law, by depriving her of all the enjoyments of a home and casting her upon her own resources. The world would consider this treatment of her as cruel and unjust; and that of her father as uncourteous and unchristian. But how analogous to the compact supposed, is the Plan of Union: how analogous to the declaring of that compact null and void, is the act of abrogation; and how analogous to the exclusion of the daughter-in-law from her home and privileges, is the excision of the churches that have been received, according to the Plan, into the Presbyterian church.

But let not a hasty judgment be passed upon the doings of so venerable a body as the General Assembly of 1837. Let its acts be impartially canvassed and decided on, only after due consideration. In the mean time let it be remembered, that the Plan of Union is a *compact* between the General Assembly and the General Association, in which the latter was pledged to instruct its missionaries to plant and build up churches of a certain kind,

and to influence Congregationalists to join them, in consideration of a promise on the part of the former, that these churches shall be taken under the care of the Assembly, and enjoy the privileges of membership with the Presbyterian body. Let it be further remembered, that the obligations of the General Assembly are two-fold: 1st, to the General Association of Connecticut; and 2d, to the churches which have accepted the conditions agreed upon by the two original parties, as proposed to them; for whom, on their consenting to the union, and thus becoming a third party, the benefits of the compact were chiefly intended.

# CHAPTER III.

## ABROGATION OF THE PLAN OF UNION.

### Reasons assigned for the Abrogation.

If the interpretation of the Plan of Union given in the preceding chapter is correct, the way is now prepared for a more particular inquiry respecting its abrogation by the General Assembly of 1837. The following is the resolution on the subject passed by that body. "As the Plan of Union adopted for the new settlements in 1801, was originally an unconstitutional act on the part of that Assembly, these important standing rules having never been submitted to the presbyteries;—and as they were totally destitute of authority as proceeding from the General Association of Connecticut, which is invested with no power to legislate in such cases, and especially to enact laws to regulate churches not within her limits; and as much confusion and irregularity have arisen from this unnatural and unconstitutional system of union, therefore, it is resolved, that the Act of the Assembly of 1801, entitled "A Plan of Union," be, and the same is hereby abrogated."*

* Minutes of the Assembly of 1837, p. 421.

Alledged unconstitutionality of the Plan of Union.

In this resolution three reasons are assigned for the act of abrogation, each of which claims a brief examination. The first is, the unconstitutionality of the Plan of Union. It is denied that the General Assembly has constitutional right to form these important standing rules without the approbation of a majority of the presbyteries, as specified in Chap. XII, Sec. 6th, of the form of government. This section provides, "that before any overtures or regulations proposed by the Assembly to be established as *constitutional rules*, shall be obligatory on the churches, it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the presbyteries, and to receive the returns of at least a majority of them, in writing, approving thereof."

The question then arises, are the provisions of the Plan of Union, such constitutional rules as are here contemplated? If this should be answered in the affirmative, then another question would arise, have they ever been approved by the presbyteries, in the manner prescribed by the constitution? However the former question may be determined, the latter may be dismissed; for it cannot be claimed, that the presbyteries have acted in that formal manner, required for the adoption of constitutional rules. In deciding whether the Plan of Union falls under the provision of the section quoted from the form of government, it must first be settled, who

are the proper judges in the case? The Presbyterian church has no court especially appointed to issue constitutional questions. Reference must, therefore, be had to her judicatories acting under the most favorable circumstances to judge impartially; and to the whole body of her members, passing judgment, directly, by an expression of their opinions, or, impliedly, by their acquiescence in the case. If it can be shown, that, for a period of years, all her judicatories from the highest to the lowest, as well as the whole body of the church, have regarded the Plan of Union as not unconstitutional, this fact will go far towards deciding, in the negative, the question whether the plan is of the nature of "those constitutional rules," which are required to be sent to the presbyteries, and to be, by a majority of them, approved, before it can be of binding force.

On the question of the constitutionality of the Plan of Union, it is proper to remark, that the Assembly of 1801, which was composed of some of the wisest and best of the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian church, did not regard the articles of agreement, which it adopted and proposed to the General Association of Connecticut, of the kind contemplated in the article of the constitution just quoted. With this opinion, all succeeding General Assemblies till the last, concurred; having uni-

formly acted on the ground that the Plan of Union was constitutional. Nor can it be asserted with truth, that this uniformity of action and approval was a mere oversight, occasioned by inadvertence. For, before several Assemblies, the question came up directly in one form and another for consideration; and before them all, questions were discussed calculated to call the attention to the subject. This, especially, was the case in the Assembly of 1806, which ordered the printing of the Plan of Union, for the use of its missionaries in the new settlements; with that of 1808, which considered and approved the Plan of Union adopted by the Synod of Albany in 1807; with that of 1821, by whose act the presbyteries of the Associate Reformed Synod were united with the Presbyterian church; and that of 1835, which in its action on the Plan of Union directly, never questioned its constitutionality. By thirty five successive Assemblies was its constitutionality conceded, and the act virtually sanctioned, by receiving commissioners from the presbyteries constituted on the Plan of Union.

The same interpretation has been given by the presbyteries, to the Act of the Assembly of 1801. From that time to the present, they have uniformly acknowledged the Plan as not unconstitutional. On all occasions they have acquiesced in it and been silent; and in 1821, when they adopted the amend-

ed constitution, they not merely acquiesced, but virtually expressed their assent; for, it is hardly conceivable, that, with a full knowledge of its existence and operation, and with the belief that it was unconstitutional, they would have proceeded to ratify the constitution, without an effort to correct so great an abuse of its powers. Thus the Presbyterian church as a body, and all its judicatories from the lowest to the highest, have for thirty five years and more, decided that the Plan of Union of 1801, was not of such a nature as to require the written assent of a majority of the presbyteries, to render it a constitutional and binding act.

It was left to the majority of the Assembly of 1837, under a special emergency, to pronounce a contrary decision; and the question is, which decision is valid? That of the whole body of the church and of the General Assembly for so long a period? Or, that of a small majority, of a divided and excited Assembly? No unbiased mind can be at a loss for an answer. If then, as was stated, the interpretation given to any particular act of Assembly, in respect to its constitutional bearings, proceeds from a legitimate source, only when it can be regarded as an expression of the opinion of the church and her judicatories, for a sufficient length of time and under circumstances to admit of a deliberate consideration and judgment; what is the

conclusion to be derived? The former decision being of this kind, while the latter was wholly destitute of these requisites, the point regarding the constitutionality of the Plan of Union was settled, before the action of the General Assembly of 1837; nor can the doings of that body on the subject, unsettle it and bring it again into dispute.

But there is another view of this subject which is important. Grant that the Plan of Union should have been sent down to the presbyteries for their approval. To whom must the fault of the neglect to do it, be attributed? Not, surely, to the General Association of Connecticut, nor to the churches which were organized under its provisions. They could do nothing in the case. The fault was chargeable solely to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, which neglected to perform a duty enjoined upon it by its own constitution. And can the Assembly of 1837, take advantage of a neglect of duty on the part of preceding Assemblies, and on this ground set aside a compact which has long been acknowledged as binding on all parties? Suppose a treaty had been made thirty five years ago between France and the United States, in which the latter stipulated, on certain conditions, to confer on a number of the subjects of the French king, the rights and privileges of American citizens. Suppose, through the neglect of the president and

of congress, the treaty failed to be ratified by the senate of the United States, but was uniformly observed in good faith by all the parties concerned. When the American government sees cause to dislike the provisions of that treaty, shall it take advantage of its own neglect, to annul it and declare that all, which has taken place under it, is set aside? No government, nor body of men, nor individuals, can take such advantage of their own acts. No principle is plainer or better established than this. If the General Assembly neglected its duty by not sending the Plan of Union to the presbyteries, it has no right now to say, that it is unconstitutional, and therefore void.

But this is not all. There is still another view of the subject which ought to be presented. It is this.—Let it be admitted for the sake of argument, that the Plan of Union was originally unconstitutional, that is, wholly inconsistent with the principles of Presbyterian government embodied in the constitution of the church. It was, nevertheless, proposed by the General Assembly of 1801, and accepted by the General Association of Connecticut; —and, for a long period, it has been acted upon by the churches in the new settlements. Important interests have grown up under it. The right of property in many instances depends on the question, whether these churches belong to the body with

which they have supposed themselves connected. If they have mistaken the constitution, they have been led into the error by the General Assembly. Now, shall that body, under these circumstances declare, that the instrument by which they claim their rights is unconstitutional, and null and void; and, as a consequence, that they are out of the Presbyterian church? Can any such abrogation of the Plan of Union be made, as will affect the standing and interests of those who have come, constitutionally, or unconstitutionally, into the Presbyterian church?

This view of the subject may well be illustrated by a reference to the treaty, by which Louisiana was ceded to the United States. If it be claimed that the act of cession was unconstitutional, and this point should be granted, could either the United States or France abrogate that treaty? After its constitutionality has been sanctioned for thirty five years by the American government, and the whole body of the people have virtually assented to it and confirmed it, would even the Supreme Court of the United States, if the question was referred, adjudge the treaty unconstitutional and void? Would it declare the states which have come into the Union in consequence of it, to be out of the Union? No such decision would be made. The treaty would be sustained, and the rights and

privileges of the states in question, would be confirmed. A contrary decision would strike at the foundation of society, and leave in doubt and jeopardy, some of the most important interests of mankind. And can the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church abrogate the Plan of Union, and not violate the principles which bind christian communities, and ecclesiastical bodies? Can it do this, and follow out its act, as it has attempted to do, in the excision of synods, without disregarding the most sacred rights. Can it resort to the mere technicalities of a constitution to justify such proceedings? Reason and conscience answer no, and the principles of the gospel forbid it. There are laws in binding force above all constitutions and all forms; and it is painful to hear an appeal to the latter, in justification of acts, which will not bear the test of the former.

From the view of this subject which has now been given, it appears that the General Assembly of 1837, took upon itself the power, not merely to repeal the act of a former Assembly, which it might in some cases very properly have done, but it reversed the decisions of the whole Presbyterian church and of all her judicatories for the last thirty-six years, on a subject involving the relations, and interest, and welfare, of a multitude of her churches. It set aside a compact as binding as any constitu-

tion could be, on the plea of its unconstitutionality, and that, when the most important consequences were involved. It did this, not only without the consent, but in opposition to the known wishes of both the other parties concerned. It must therefore be regarded, in whatever aspect its measures are contemplated, to say the least, as having transgressed the spirit of its constitution, in its unwarrantable zeal to maintain the letter.

# CHAPTER IV.

## ABROGATION OF THE PLAN OF UNION.

### Second reason considered.

The second reason assigned, in the resolution of the Assembly, for the abrogation of the Plan of Union, is, that the General Association of Connecticut had no authority to act as a party in the agreement; 1st, because, "it is invested with no power to legislate in such cases," and 2d, because, it cannot "enact laws to regulate churches not within its limits." Such reasons sound strangely to the Congregationalists of Connecticut; and must sound equally strange to all who are acquainted with the facts in the case. The General Association of Connecticut is an ecclesiastical body of long standing; and for nearly half a century has acted as a missionary society. If it were a mere voluntary association, it would be authorized in common law, to transact business in reference to the welfare of Christ's kingdom. Engagements lawfully entered into by it for this purpose, would be recognized, by civil courts, as binding on all the parties concerned. It has been decided, in one instance at least, that a voluntary association, organized for a specific be-

nevolent object, is capable of acting for the accomplishment of that object in such a manner as to become a legal party;* and the same principle would apply to the General Association of Connecticut as a missionary society, though it had no act of incorporation, and its existence had never been acknowledged by any legislature. It is, certainly, on this view of the subject, a very singular position to be taken by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, that a kindred ecclesiastical body and a missionary society, has no power to "legislate" in respect to its missionaries and the churches to which they are sent.

But the General Association of Connecticut is not a mere *voluntary association.* Since 1708, when the legislature of Connecticut approved the "regulations in the administration of church discipline," &c., agreed upon by the elders and messengers of the churches assembled at Saybrook the same year, it has been a body known and established by law; and, therefore, legally capable of transacting such business as falls within its nature and design.† Its existence as a missionary society, had been, for several years previous to the adoption of the Plan of Union, sanctioned by the acts of the

* Case of the Burr legacy to the American Tract Society.

† Saybrook Platform, edition of 1810, p. 136.

legislature, authorizing it to collect funds from the inhabitants of the State, and to use them for missionary purposes: and in 1802, soon after the agreement with the General Assembly, it was regularly incorporated by receiving a formal charter.

Such being the General Association of Connecticut, the question is, did it fall within the scope of its powers, to enter into compact with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, in regard to the provisions of the Plan of Union? Was it adequate to agree, on its part, that its "missionaries to the new settlements, should endeavor by all proper means to promote mutual forbearance and accommodation between those inhabitants of the new settlements, who hold the Presbyterian and those who hold the Congregational form of church government?" Had it power to agree with the Assembly, to recommend to Congregationalists and Presbyterians in these settlements, to unite together into churches according to the mode prescribed in the Plan of Union? Who can doubt that it possessed powers of this kind even in law, so that if questions of property were to arise from the agreement, legal titles might be established? Who can doubt, that, if the possession of a house of worship depended upon the question, whether the General Association of Connecticut had power to perform all that it assumed to do in the Plan of Union, a court

of justice would at once decide on the ground of the adequacy of these powers?

In regard to the power of the Association "to enact laws to regulate churches not within its limits," it is sufficient to remark, that no such power is assumed in the agreement under consideration. Both individuals and churches were left by the Plan of Union free to act as they pleased; and in case they adopted its recommendation, then, by their own voluntary act, and not by any act of the General Association, they entered into connection with the Presbyterian church. The Association neither used nor claimed to use, any power but the influence of advice. Why is so obvious a fact entirely lost sight of, in the resolution of the General Assembly? Why is the voluntary action of the churches, in accepting the proposals made them, left entirely out of the account, and the General Association of Connecticut represented as disposing of them, by its own authority, to the General Assembly, when such a representation is wholly without foundation?

The argument as now presented, may seem to admit the necessity of *legal qualifications* in the parties concerned, to form a compact, like that of the Plan of Union, which shall be mutually binding. No such admission, however, is intended. There are moral obligations above all human laws,

which are binding on ecclesiastical bodies and associations of christians in all their engagements with each other. They are bound to act in good faith, though no human laws exist, to enforce such action. When they attempt to evade their obligations, by a resort to mere legal forms, or constitutional rules, they show dishonesty of intention, and bring upon themselves deserved reprobation. It is really painful to see a body of men, like the majority of the General Assembly of 1837, composed of ministers and elders of the Presbyterian church, so forgetful of the basis of christian obligation, as seriously to assign in the face of the world, as a reason for abrogating the Plan of Union, that the General Association of Connecticut wanted power to do all that it did as a party to that compact.

But the consistency of the act appears to no better advantage than its moral aspect.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church has, for a long period, acknowledged the General Association of Connecticut, as a body capable of forming compacts for purposes of mutual good and the advancement of Christ's cause. In 1792, the two bodies respectively agreed to a standing committee of correspondence, and to an interchange of delegates; and in 1794, they mutually agreed that these delegates should vote as other members of the respective bodies. When the General Assem-

bly became dissatisfied with the latter regulation, it proposed its discontinuance; and the General Association readily assented. The Assembly of 1835 adopted a similar course in regard to the Plan of Union. It "resolved that our brethren of the General Association of Connecticut, be, and they hereby are respectfully requested to consent that said Plan shall be, from and after the next meeting of that Association, declared to be annulled."*

Thus, from 1792 to 1837, the General Assembly has uniformly recognized the General Association of Connecticut, as invested with power to act for the good of the churches under their mutual care; and has acknowledged the moral obligation to observe in good faith the agreements entered into

* This resolution was never presented to the General Association of Connecticut. The fact was stated to the Assembly of 1837, by one of the delegates from the General Association of Connecticut, and his statement was confirmed by the reading of the report of the delegates to the Association from the Assembly of 1835. No copy of the resolution, and no instructions were forwarded them. Therefore, neither they, nor the General Association, acted *on common fame.* Yet in the circular letter to all the churches, signed by the Moderator, to whom the above statement was addressed, and by the Clerk, who read the report, it is said: "The General Assembly of 1835, respectfully requested the General Association of Connecticut to consent that the Plan of Union in question should be annulled. Having now waited two additional years in vain for any favorable action in the case, on the part of our brethren in Connecticut," &c.

General Assembly contradicts its own practice.

by the parties. By what logic the last Assembly came to the conclusion, that the General Association wanted authority to act in the Plan of Union, and that the agreement is therefore null and void, it is difficult to determine.

# CHAPTER V.

## ABROGATION OF THE PLAN OF UNION.

### Third reason assigned.

The third reason assigned in the resolution for the act of abrogation is, that "much confusion and irregularity have arisen from this unnatural and unconstitutional system of union." To discover what is here intended, it will be necessary to look beyond the face of the resolution. There is no occasion, however, to travel far in search of evidence. This is found ready prepared in the "Testimony and Memorial of the convention of 1837," as embodied in the report of the committee of the Assembly on that Memorial.* The limits of this work will allow only an abstract to be given.

The confusion and irregularity in question are presented in ten specifications. These relate to the formation of presbyteries without territorial limits; the refusal of presbyteries to examine applicants for admission, as to their soundness in the faith; the licensing and ordaining of such as adopt the standards only for substance of doctrine, and even of many who deny fundamental doctrines; the for-

* Minutes of the Assembly of 1837, p. 471.

mation of a variety of creeds; the ordination of a multitude of men to the office of evangelist; the disuse of the office of ruling elder in portions of the church; the electing and ordaining ruling elders for a limited time; a progressive change in the system of presbyterial representation in the General Assembly; the influence of voluntary and irresponsible societies; and the unconstitutional decisions and violent proceedings of several General Assemblies. These, in substance, are the irregularities and disorders which are complained of, in the memorials, and no doubt, intended in the resolution; and which the General Assembly of 1837 charges upon "the unnatural and unconstitutional system of union." In its pastoral letter to the churches under its care, are found the following expressions. "The contentions which distract the church evidently arose from the Plan of Union formed in 1801, between the General Assembly and the Association of Connecticut." "We believe that the attempt, by this Plan of Union, to bring Congregationalists and Presbyterians into the same denomination, has been the principal cause of those dissensions, which now distract and rend the church to pieces." "This has been the source of all our present evils;—the raising up of presbyteries and synods out of men who had at least as much of the Congregational as the Presbyterian character, has scattered the ele-

ments of discord through all our regions, and torn our afflicted church to pieces. These indeed were consequences not perceived from the beginning; it required the light of experience to teach us, that the amalgamation of such bodies as the Congregational and Presbyterian, would produce a ferment sufficient to agitate the whole American nation." In the opinion, therefore, of the majority of the last General Assembly, the Plan of Union "has had the slow but inevitable effect to subvert the order and discipline of the Presbyterian church."

To enable the reader to decide correctly on this subject, some knowledge is requisite of the past history of the Presbyterian church in the United States. For a period of twenty years from the formation of its first presbytery, viz. that of Philadelphia, it had no bond of union but the bible, and a general agreement in respect to its plan of salvation. The ministers of that time declared themselves "willing to admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances, all such as they had grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of Heaven." Congregationalists and Presbyterians were on terms of perfect friendship and equality, notwithstanding any difference of views respecting church government. Whether churches were constituted with ruling elders or not, was regarded as a point of minor importance, and was never brought into con-

What they mean by "irregularity."

troversy. By degrees, however, the fabric of Presbyterianism grew up. A form of government was adopted, in which churches with ruling elders, and presbyteries and synods, and, at length, a General Assembly, were recognized; and a rigid adherence to this system was claimed by the advocates of strict Presbyterianism. Such, however, has been the liberality of views in the great body of the church, that no efforts of this party have ever been successful in establishing a high church policy in regard to discipline. Indeed, it is but a very short period, since any such attempts have been made. When the Plan of Union was adopted, and for many subsequent years, the introduction of Congregationalists into the Presbyterian denomination, whether ministers, or laymen, or churches, was regarded on all sides with favor and approbation. The confusion and irregularity which the last Assembly have attributed to the Plan of Union and made a reason for its abrogation, would then have been considered as no confusion and irregularity at all, nor as threatening the least evil to the church or to the cause of Christ.

The real question on the subject of disorders now is, shall Congregationalism, in any shape, be tolerated in the Presbyterian church? This question embraces nearly the whole ground of complaint on this subject, and divides the church into two

great parties. The majority of the last Assembly have decided it in the negative, and proceeded to abrogate the Plan of Union. In carrying out that decision, with the same object in view, and as a professed consequence of that act, they have attempted to exscind the four synods of Utica, Geneva, Genesee, and the Western Reserve; to dissolve the third presbytery of Philadelphia; and to exclude the American Home Missionary and the American Education Societies, from the bounds of the Presbyterian church.

Such are the reasons alledged in the resolution, for abrogating the Plan of Union, and now let the reader pause and ask, are they good and sufficient? Do they convince an enlightened christian of unbiased mind, whose great object is to advance the kingdom of Christ? Are they reasons which the Redeemer himself will accept in justification of the measure, on the great day of account? Can any man believe that the Plan of Union is such an unconstitutional act, that a solemn compact with the General Association of Connecticut establishing it, is not morally binding on the other party to the agreement? Can any man believe that the Association is a body incapable of entering into such a compact, in any such sense, that the other contracting party is under no obligation to fulfill its engagements? Can any one believe, that the evils

of "this unnatural and unconstitutional system of union," as it is called, are such as to require the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, in the conscientious discharge of its duty, to declare it abrogated? It scarcely seems possible, that any man should be brought into the sober belief of these things.

The Plan of Union was adopted by all parties with good intentions, and has been the cause of blessings neither few nor small, to those for whose benefit it was intended. The General Association of Connecticut acted, at the first, with the most liberal feelings, and has, ever since, maintained a course in accordance with such feelings. The ministers and churches of Connecticut, in this matter, had no sectarian designs. They gained neither power, nor wealth, nor fame, except the deserved and lasting reputation of christian benevolence. The only boon they sought, was the satisfaction of doing good in giving the bread of life to their destitute brethren in the west, and the rewards promised the faithful and obedient servants of Christ. They, in fact, shut the door against the enlargement of the Congregational denomination, which, but for the Plan of Union, might have been greatly increased in numbers and influence, through the labors of their missionaries in the new settlements. They were content to sow the field, from which

their brethren of another denomination, should gather the harvest. We may challenge the world to show an example of more disinterested benevolent action.

If an accession of numbers, and wealth, and piety, and moral influence, is to be regarded as a blessing to any denomination of christians, the Presbyterian church, in the language of one of her distinguished ministers, "owes an everlasting debt of gratitude to the Connecticut Missionary Society." As the result of the joint action of its missionaries and those of the General Assembly, on the basis of the Plan of Union, up to the year 1828, more than six hundred Presbyterian churches, in New York and Pennsylvania, and the states and territories lying west of them, had been organized. Many others have been subsequently added to the number. Thus the waste places were built up, the Plan of Union, for thirty-six years, being a bond of fellowship, between Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the new settlements, and the source of peace and harmony to the infant churches of the west. Those that were organized under it, from the Hudson to the Mississippi, appreciated its blessings; and not a murmur of complaint was uttered against it by those who had seen its operations and experienced its effects. Indeed, all parties were satisfied, till various causes came into existence to

change the views of a certain portion of the Presbyterian church. A proper understanding of these causes will lead to the conclusion, that the true reasons for the abrogation of the Plan of Union, were not its unconstitutionality, nor the alledged evils resulting from its operation. These are a mere subterfuge; a plausible pretext for the measures pursued. If its operation had been to increase the power of a particular party, the constitutional question might still be at rest, and the harmless Plan might go on, accomplishing the good for which it was designed. These assertions may call forth from some the charge of an improper impeachment of motives; but the right is claimed of speaking freely, provided it is done in a christian spirit, of the motives of men, when openly avowed, or clearly deducible from their acts. This right will be freely exercised in the following pages, under a sense of responsibility to God for the intentions of the writer, and for the effects which his writings are calculated to produce.

The next step will be to unfold the real causes of the abrogation of the Plan of Union; and if success attends this undertaking, much also will be done to reveal the causes of the subsequent acts of the last General Assembly;—the excision of the synods, the dissolution of the presbytery, and the exclusion of the Home Missionary and Education

Societies;—for these acts were all aimed at one general object. That object was the removal of New England opinions and influence from the Presbyterian church. The correctness of this statement has been questioned; but its truth cannot reasonably be denied, by any who are acquainted with the history of parties in that church from its beginning to the present time.

# CHAPTER VI.

## ORIGIN OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

### Adopting Act.

THE Presbyterian church in the United States was originally composed of Presbyterians from Scotland and Ireland, and Congregationalists chiefly from New England. The Congregationalists were at first the majority, and, as has already been remarked, the two denominations united on the common ground of a belief in the great doctrines of the bible, and of saving faith in Jesus Christ. This union was continued for a period of twenty-five years, without any written confession or form of government. In 1729, the synod of Philadelphia, then composed of four presbyteries, and embracing the whole body of Presbyterian ministers, passed an act, not however without considerable opposition, adopting the Westminster confession of faith with the Assembly's larger and shorter catechism, "as being in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words, and systems of christian doctrine."* By this act, a declaration of assent to the confession and catechisms was required "in all the

* New York Observer, 1831, p. 97.

essential and necessary articles," by members of the synod and candidates for the ministry; at the same time it was provided, that, "in case any minister of this synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said confession or catechisms, he shall, at the time of his making said declaration, declare his sentiments to the presbytery or synod, who shall notwithstanding admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds and to ministerial communion, if the synod or presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be about articles not essential and necessary, in doctrine, worship, or government." "The synod also do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious terms of those that differ from us in those extra essential and not necessary points of doctrine; but treat them with the same friendship, kindness and brotherly love, as if they had not differed from us in such sentiments." The members of the synod, "after proposing all the scruples any of them had against any articles and expressions of the confession of faith, and larger and shorter catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, unanimously agreed in the solution of those scruples, and in declaring the said confession and catechisms to be the confession of their faith;" only disowning the "controlling power of the civil magistrate,"

with respect to the exercise of the ministry, and the rights of conscience.

The synod also "unanimously declared, that they judged the Directory for worship, discipline, and government of the church, commonly annexed to the Westminster confession, to be agreeable to the word of God and founded thereupon, and therefore do earnestly recommend it to all their members to be by them observed, as near as circumstances will allow and christian prudence direct."

Two facts are strikingly exhibited in the adopting act, from which these quotations are made. One is, that diversity of sentiment existed in the members of the synod of 1729; the other is, that in the exercise of a catholic spirit, they were ready to overlook minor differences of opinion, and make an agreement, *in substance of doctrine*, the basis of union. They declared, that "we do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men's consciences; but do profess our just dissatisfaction and abhorrence of such impositions, and utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the church, being willing to receive one another as Christ has received us, to the glory of God; and to admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven." For nearly twenty years, the Congregation-

alists and Presbyterians thus united, maintained general harmony; a liberal construction of their articles of faith, and the exercise of christian catholicism, preventing serious contentions and unhappy divisions. A difference of views, however, respecting presbyterial order and ministerial qualifications, distinctly marked two parties in the church; and so widely did they differ in sentiment and feeling, that there was needed only a sufficiently exciting cause to produce a separation. That cause was furnished by the labors of Mr. Whitefield, in connection with whose ministry, glorious and extensive revivals of religion took place, in the Presbyterian church and in New England. The strict Presbyterians, called at that time the *Old Side*, regarded Mr. Whitefield and his friends as "ignorant and extravagant enthusiasts." The other party, called the *New Side*, or *New Lights*, viewed their opponents as "pharisaical formalists."* Animosities increased, until the synod of Philadelphia, after a violent controversy, was rent asunder, and two rival synods were formed, viz. New York and Philadelphia. The members of the former synod were almost unanimously the friends and coadjutors of Mr. Whitefield; while those of the latter were, generally, if not universally, his decided opposers.

* Miller's Life of Rodgers.

The separation which thus took place, was not strictly marked by geographical limits; but the members of each synod, to a considerable extent, were scattered over the whole ground occupied by the Presbyterian church. In New Jersey, however, there was not a single clergyman who belonged to the synod of Philadelphia. The whole Presbyterian population of the province, was zealously attached to the interests of the New York synod. This rendered it in the view of that synod, a proper field for the location of a seminary, designed, in part, by the education of youth for the christian ministry, to advance the interests of its own party. With this view, the college of New Jersey was founded; and the Rev. Jonathan Dickinson, a native of Massachusetts, and a warm friend of Mr. Whitefield, was appointed its first president. His successor was the Rev. Aaron Burr, a native of Connecticut, a great admirer and friend also of Mr. Whitefield. Then succeeded the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, whose friendship for Mr. Whitefield, and whose active labors in the revivals of his time, are well known. Of the same stamp, were the Rev. James Lockwood, of Wethersfield, Conn., who was elected to the presidency, but declined; and presidents Davies and Finley, the former of whom, with the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, was deputed by the Board of Trustees, in the infancy of the college, to

raise funds in Great Britain; and the latter, was once carried out of the colony of Connecticut as a vagrant, under a law enacted by the legislature of the colony, at the instigation of the enemies of revivals and the opposers of Mr. Whitefield. Thus the college of New Jersey originated with the New Lights, and for many years was in the hands of the Congregational party, from whom it received its chief support.*

The synods of New York and Philadelphia, after remaining divided for seventeen years, at length, in 1758, were united. The evils which they had experienced by division, taught both parties salutary lessons respecting forbearance and toleration; but diversity of opinion on many important subjects was not removed. Party feelings and distinctions were not wholly laid aside; much less did the original parties undergo a complete amalgamation. The Scotch and Irish Presbyterians and their descendants, in general, were *Old Side* still; while those of New England origin and sentiments were *New Side*, and almost as distinctly marked as ever. These two parties, with a slight change in name, and an alteration in the position of a few individuals, from various causes, have formed the basis of the two great parties which now divide the Pres-

* Quarterly Register, Aug. 1834, p. 42.

byterian church. The Old School and New School, are the Old Side and New Side, the old divinity and new divinity men of former times. The nucleus of each of the present parties, not only existed in 1704, but has ever since existed the same thing as ever, and now essentially determines the character of the agglomerated mass. In the lapse of years, indeed, under the operation of various attracting and repelling influences and disturbing causes, some important changes have taken place, and elective affinities have resulted, for which it may be difficult, on common laws, to account; but no one can reasonably doubt, that strict Presbyterianism, on the one hand, distinguishes the Old School now, as formerly; and that on the other, liberal Presbyterianism, as at the first, characterizes the New School. Liberal Presbyterianism being of New England origin and wearing the impress of New England sentiments, is the object of attack with the Old School party; and hence the present struggle in the Presbyterian church relates primarily to New England opinions and influence. For the suppression of these opinions, and the removal of this influence, the majority of the General Assembly of 1837, adopted their revolutionary measures. Here is found the cause of the abrogation of the Plan of Union, and the proceedings connected with that act. Here was the supposed enemy

against which, from a diversity of interests and motives, the forces of the Old School were rallied, and marched in unbroken columns. No person who has read the debates in the Philadelphia convention, and in the Assembly of 1837, and especially the pastoral and circular letters proceeding from the majority of the Assembly, can require any other evidence of the fact. Much less should any deny it who voted to print those letters in their minutes, and lay them before the world as their official acts.

# CHAPTER VII.

## CAUSES UNITING THE MAJORITY.

The causes classified.

The immediate object of the abrogation of the Plan of Union having been pointed out in the preceding chapter, it is well worth while to inquire after the various interests which operated to unite the majority of the Assembly of 1837, in the measures designed for the attainment of their end. For this purpose, the history of events connected with the subject, for a number of years past, must be examined, that it may be seen through what combined influences unison in feeling and action, in regard to the measures in question, was produced. The causes referred to, may, for the sake of convenience, be thus classified and arranged.

1. The recent excitement in different parts of the church in respect to slavery and abolition.

2. The fear of encroachment upon the supposed prerogatives of "the church in her distinctive character."

3. The judicial proceedings of the church, growing out of real diversity of doctrinal views; and,

4. The late theological controversies of New England, and especially of Connecticut.

The order in which these causes are named, is chosen, not with reference to their supposed importance, but for the sake of disposing of the former two with a brief notice, and of entering more fully into an investigation of the others.

1. The recent excitement in different parts of the United States, and in the Presbyterian church, on the subject of slavery and abolition, has had an influence in causing the proceedings of the General Assembly of 1837.

It has been denied by some that slavery had any influence on the proceedings of that body. By others it has been maintained, that the abolition movements at the north, and opposition to them at the south, were a principal cause of the excision of the synods, and of the other acts of the Assembly designed to exclude New England sentiments from the Presbyterian church. The truth probably lies between these two opinions, though nearer the former than the latter. The majority of the Assembly was, no doubt, increased by the addition of some southern votes which would not have been given, as they were, irrespective of the slavery question. It was suspected that New School men, as a body, were leaning towards abolitionism more than the opposite party; and that their predominance in the church would increase the moral influence of the north against the system of slavery.

It was even feared that the General Assembly, under certain contingencies, would again officially condemn some features of the system, as practiced by members of the church, if not the system itself, as unscriptural and anti-christian. On the other hand, there was reason to believe, that so long as an Old School majority prevailed, there would be no direct action on the subject in the highest judicatory of the church. The mind of Dr. Baxter, the president of the Philadelphia convention, and the defender of slavery as a scriptural institution, was filled with anxiety on the subject; and he was chiefly induced, it would seem from his own statement, to become a member of the convention that he might feel the pulse of the northern abolitionists of the Old School party. This he found to beat in a manner denoting a healthy state, there being no indications of disease except in one or two, and in these, very little appearance of febrile action. This state of things in the convention no doubt excited the hope in some, of protecting "the domestic institutions of the south," by crushing a northern influence in the General Assembly. To understand how the question of slavery and abolition may have operated in the manner here stated, it will be necessary to attend to the positions in which this question has stood at different times before the General Assembly; and to the different views which

are at present entertained in different sections of the Presbyterian church.

The synod of New York and Philadelphia, in 1787, being then the supreme judicatory of the church, adopted the following "judgement," after taking into consideration an overture concerning slavery.

"The synod do highly approve of the general principles in favor of universal liberty that prevail in America, and the interest which many of the states have taken in promoting the abolition of slavery. They earnestly recommend it to all the members belonging to their communion, to give those persons who are at present held in servitude, such good education as to prepare them for the better enjoyment of freedom. And they moreover recommend that masters, whenever they find servants disposed to make a just improvement of that privilege, would give them a peculium, or grant them sufficient time and sufficient means of procuring their own liberty at a moderate rate; that thereby they may be brought into society, with those habits of industry that may render them useful citizens. And finally, they recommend it to all their people to use the most prudent measures, consistent with the interests and the state of civil society in the countries where they live, to procure eventually the final abolition of slavery in America."

General Assembly on slavery.

In 1794, the General Assembly adopted the following comment on 1 Tim. 1: 10, in a note appended to the 142d question of the larger catechism. "The law is made for man-stealers. This crime among the Jews exposed the perpetrators of it to capital punishment; and the apostle here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses, in its original import, comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery or in retaining them in it. *Hominum fures, qui servos vel liberos abducunt, retinent, vendunt, vel emunt*—Stealers of men are all those who bring off slaves or freemen, and keep, sell, or buy them. To steal a freeman, says Grotius, is the highest kind of theft. In other instances, we only steal human property; but when we steal or retain men in slavery, we seize those who in common with ourselves, are constituted by the original grant, lords of the earth."

In 1815, the question was proposed to the Assembly, whether a person who views slavery as a moral evil, highly offensive to God and injurious to the interests of the gospel, ought to hold communion with those who concur with him in sentiment, on the subject upon general principles, yet for particular reasons hold slaves and tolerate the practice in others? Upon this question the Assembly resolved, "that as the same difference of opinion with

respect to slavery takes place in sundry other parts of the Presbyterian church, notwithstanding which, they live in charity and peace, according to the doctrine and practice of the apostles; it is hereby recommended to all conscientious persons, and especially to those whom it immediately respects, to do the same. At the same time the General Assembly assure all the churches under their care, that they view with the deepest concern any vestiges of slavery which may exist in our country; and refer the churches to the records of the General Assembly published at different times," as expressing their present views on the subject.

In 1816, the Assembly resolved, "that the note connected with the scripture proofs in answer to the question in the larger catechism, 'what is forbidden in the eighth commandment,' in which the nature of the crime of man-stealing and slavery is dilated upon, *be omitted.*"

In 1818, the Assembly made a full expression of its views on slavery. Amongst other things it declared, that "we consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ, which

enjoin, that all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

After stating the great evils inseparably connected with slavery, the Assembly says, that "from this view of the consequences resulting from the practice into which Christian people have most inconsistently fallen, of enslaving a portion of their brethren of mankind, it is manifestly the duty of all christians, when the inconsistency of slavery with the dictates of humanity and religion has been demonstrated, and is generally seen and acknowledged, to use their honest, earnest, and unwearied endeavors, as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion, and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout the world."

This brief notice of the action of the highest judicatory of the church on the subject of slavery during the thirty one years, from 1787 to 1818, will serve to shew, that even in that period the subject was surrounded with difficulties, and liable to produce great excitement whenever brought forward for discussion. It will also be seen, that as the church extended and increased in numbers in the slave-holding region, to calm the feelings of the south, the Assembly was obliged to modify and soften down the language condemnatory of slavery; and it is owing no doubt to the increased difficulties in which the subject has since been involved,

and the tendency to undue excitement always manifested, whenever it has come up, that no official act of the Assembly has been passed upon it for the last nineteen years.

The following extract from an article in the Princeton Biblical Repertory for January, 1832, ascribed to Dr. Alexander, in which the writer proposes and recommends a reorganization of the Presbyterian church, presents a correct view of the manner in which this subject has agitated the ecclesiastical judicatories.

"We shall advert," says the writer, "to another consideration which in our opinion strongly recommends the organization now proposed. In a large extent of country over which our church is spread, domestic slavery exists and is practiced by church members, under the impression, that in existing circumstances it is lawful, and authorized by the precepts and practice of the apostles. But those parts of the church where slavery is not tolerated, view the whole thing with abhorrence, and cannot exercise, in many cases at least, charity towards the holders of slaves. This subject has been threatening to disturb and divide the Presbyterian church, almost ever since it had an existence; and the evil has only been prevented by great prudence in the General Assembly. They have commonly contrived to evade this agitating subject; but this

course has not satisfied all, and, before long, it must come up in such a form as greatly to disturb, if not rend the church asunder. But by the proposed plan of arrangement, all the churches in the slaveholding states, will be separated from those of the non-slaveholding states, and there will be no opportunity of their coming into collision in the ecclesiastical judicatories."

If any further proof is wanted of the agitating nature of the slavery question, we may gather it from the proceedings of the General Assembly of 1836. The discussion of the subject in that body produced a great ferment. On the one hand it was contended, that the Assembly had no right to pass judgment in regard to slavery, or even to discuss the subject; that by its former action, abolitionism and Presbyterianism were completely identified throughout the south; and that they should be compelled to abandon Presbyterianism, or seek protection under a separate organization. On the other hand it was maintained, that the buying, selling, or holding human beings as property, is in the sight of God a heinous sin, demanding the censure of the church; and that the General Assembly ought to bear its decided testimony against it. And to such a pitch did the excitement arise, that the indefinite postponement of the whole subject could only allay it.

Presbytery of Harmony on slavery.

But we shall become better acquainted with the views at present entertained in the different parts of the Presbyterian church on the subject of slavery, by referring to some of the resolutions of different presbyteries and synods. In Oct. 1836, the presbytery of Harmony, South Carolina, resolved among other things, "that the church has no right to prescribe rules and dictate principles which can bind or affect the conscience in reference to slavery; and any such attempt would constitute ecclesiastical tyranny; that slavery has existed from the days of those good old slave-holders and patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that the existence of slavery is not opposed to the will of God, and whosoever has a conscience too tender to recognize this relation as lawful, is righteous over much, is wise above what is written, and has submitted his neck to the yoke of man, sacrificed his christian liberty of conscience, and leaves the infallible word of God for the fancies and doctrines of men." The resolutions from which the above is extracted, were reported by Dr. Witherspoon, the Moderator of the General Assembly of 1836, and a slave-holder; but they are doubtless a correct expression of the sentiments of many southern ministers and members of the Presbyterian church.

The synod of Virginia, in Nov. 1836, passed an act on the state of the church, which was ordered

to be printed in the Southern Religious Telegraph, and which contained a request to every pastor within the limits of the body, to read it to his charge. In this document they say, "one thing which presses with peculiar force on the Presbyterian church in the south, is the spirit of abolition as lately developed in some parts of our country;" and after arguing to shew that slavery is recognized in scripture and not unlawful, they solemnly affirm, "that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church have no right to declare that relation sinful, which Christ and his apostles teach to be consistent with the most unquestionable piety." They add, "the likelihood of the necessity of a geographical division, through the operation of this fanaticism, is not so great as it was some time ago; yet on this subject, be the danger great or small, a vigilance corresponding with the exigencies of the times is our manifest duty."

In opposition to sentiments like these, northern presbyteries and synods declare themselves fully against the system of slavery. Three of the exscinded synods, if not the whole number, have passed resolutions on the subject.

In Oct. 1835, the synod of Genesee adopted the following preamble and resolutions: "Whereas synod believes slavery to be a great and growing evil and sinful in the sight of God, afflicting to the

soul of the christian and alarming to the fears of the patriot; and considering it our duty as christians to seek, by all christian measures, the utter extinction of slavery from the church; therefore, resolved, that we deem it proper respectfully to request, and we do hereby request, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church to take order on this subject, and to devise such measures as in their wisdom shall be judged safest and best to effect the extinction of the evil in our own church, at as early a day as possible."

The synod of Western Reserve also expressed its opinion, "that slavery as it exists in the United States is a sin against God; a high-handed trespass on the rights of man; a great physical, political, and social evil, which ought to be immediately and universally abandoned." The synod of Utica declared its belief, that "slavery as it exists in these United States, is repugnant both to the letter and spirit of the gospel; a flagrant violation of the law of love; a sin against God and man."

The synod of Cincinnati also resolved in 1836, "that the presbyteries and churches circulate extensively, petitions to the next General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, to enjoin it on all the presbyteries and church sessions under their care, to exclude from the communion of the church all persons who shall claim the right of property in their fellow-men."

Action of the Assembly on slavery deprecated.

The resolutions now quoted, show the opposing sentiments between the north and the south, on a subject, in which the feelings of men for the last three or four years have been strongly excited; and there are various considerations which show, that slavery had some connection at least with the doings of the General Assembly of 1837.

In those quarters, in which a division of the church was threatened on account of abolition, there was less of threat, as there was more of probability, that an Old School majority would be gained in the General Assembly. Take the language of the synod of Virginia before quoted, that "the likelihood of the necessity of a geographical division of the church through the operation of this fanaticism is not so great as it was, some time ago;" and what, in connection with other facts, does it go to prove? The action of the Assembly, declaring "slavery sinful," and impeaching the christian character of any man because he is a slave-holder, was a thing especially deprecated. This was what threatened a division of the church. But how was the likelihood of this diminished in the view of the synod, in Nov. 1836? No doubt by the prospect of a majority in the General Assembly, who would be content, at least, to let the matter of slavery rest. This was the ground which Princeton would take, and on which the Old School would agree; and

A mutual understanding on the subject.

hence the votes of the synod of Virginia, which, in 1834, were with two exceptions, given against the memorial to that Assembly, were in 1837 given unanimously in favor of the principal measures recommended by the Philadelphia convention. There appears also to have been a tacit agreement on the part of the majority of the Assembly of 1837, that the subject of slavery should not come before that body. All the papers relating to it were retained in the hands of the committee till a late period of the session, when they were returned to the house without report; and on motion of the chairman of that committee, the whole subject was unceremoniously laid on the table. Can this be satisfactorily explained, except on the supposition of a mutual understanding between the abolitionists of the Old School and their southern brethren of the majority, that, letting this exciting topic alone, they should march in unbroken ranks against heresy; while the south would in a measure gain its object, by excluding New England influence from the Presbyterian church.

But the strongest evidence of the influence of slavery in uniting the dominant party in these measures, is derived from the fact, that the subject had been agitated in nearly all the ecclesiastical bodies in the land, and was occasioning more excitement throughout the country than any other;

and that southern members of the Presbyterian church are anxious to prevent even its discussion in the General Assembly. The supposition cannot be easily reconciled with the laws of the human mind,—that a subject awakening such intense and general interest, should have had no place in the views, and feelings, and motives, which actuated ministers and elders from the slave-holding region, in giving their votes on questions of the nature of those which came before the Assembly of 1837. They knew that the great mass of northern christians, are in principle opposed to the system of slavery. They entertained serious alarm respecting the movements of northern abolitionists. They were desirous to prevent all interference of the north with their "domestic institutions," and with the laws and customs relating to them. Many were unwilling to tolerate even the expression of an opinion unfavorable to the rights of masters or the condition of slaves. And what more probable, than that under such circumstances they should be induced to sustain measures which a few years ago they would have rejected? Says Dr. Baxter, president of the convention of 1837, in justification of the measures of the Assembly, "another advantage of the course pursued, if it be sustained and carried out by the churches, is, that it will put an end to the abolition question and disturbance in the Pres-

byterian church."—"I have no doubt, that if the separation begun should be carried out, the Presbyterian church, by getting clear of the New School, will at the same time get clear of abolition.*

Can it be doubted that under impressions like these, such men as Dr. Baxter, and other advocates of slavery as a scriptural institution, would vote for measures of reform, which, if in their view disconnected entirely from that subject, they would cordially disapprove? And did not some of the majority of the General Assembly of 1837, act under precisely such impressions? But undue weight must not be given to slavery and abolition as a cause of the proceedings of the Assembly. Other causes will be developed in the progress of this work, which will, it is believed, make the influence of that now considered, appear of minor importance.

* New York Observer, 1837, p. 110.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## ENCROACHMENTS ON HIGH CHURCH PREROGATIVES FEARED.

The church in her distinctive character.

A SECOND cause of the abrogation of the Plan of Union and of the subsequent acts of the General Assembly of 1837, may be found in the fears, entertained by some, of encroachments upon the supposed prerogatives of the church in her distinctive character.

There are, in the Presbyterian church, those who not only look upon her form of government as a perfect ecclesiastical system, but as appointed by divine authority. Her ministers, and elders, and deacons, are the bishops, and elders, and deacons of apostolic days; and her church sessions, and presbyteries, and synods, and General Assembly, are essentially judicatories divinely constituted. Hence the church in all matters of morality or religion, must act in her distinctive character. In her capacity as a church of Jesus Christ, she must, through her own judicatories, fulfill the commands of the gospel. Others, who do not come quite up to the standard of this high church orthodoxy, look upon

The standards of the church how regarded.

the Presbyterian organization as one of unrivalled excellence, and to be maintained according to the letter of her constitution. Her confession of faith and form of discipline must be adopted, not as a system from which there may be dissent in some particulars of minor importance, as was the usage at first; but they must be received as true to the letter, and as being in every word and expression, neither more nor less than the faith of him who adopts them. Indeed, the standards of the church seem to be, in the estimation of some, almost paramount to the bible, as a means of correct doctrinal instructions and a safeguard against error. Their appeal is to the standards of the church, and the least deviation in sentiment or phraseology from them, is in their view little better than heresy. Hence their opposition to the principles of accommodation in the Plan of Union, and to voluntary associations. Elders set apart by ordination, must be the only lay members of judicatories. Delinquents must be called to account by church sessions, and go through all the process of discipline prescribed in the constitution. Any mixture of Congregational principles of government can by no means be tolerated. How much these high church notions depend upon the present position of parties in the Presbyterian body, it is not essential to determine; but that the ideal perfection of pure Presbyterianism, as it exists

in the minds of many, has had its influence in urging them on to a course of bold and decided measures for reform, there can be no reasonable doubt.

There is, however, among the Old School party, a difference of opinion, in regard to voluntary associations. Some seem disposed to tolerate, if not support, those which are not concerned in introducing New England theology and Congregationalism into the Presbyterian church. Others would discountenance the American Board of Foreign Missions, and even the American Temperance Society, because they are not church organizations. The church in her distinctive character, they think, must have the control of all benevolent operations in which her members are engaged, lest she should lose her power and influence, and open a door for the introduction of disorder and heresy. But not to attribute too much to the influence of these high church notions in forming the majority of the Assembly of 1837, it ought to be understood that the opposition to voluntary associations, manifested in the acts of discountenancing the American Home Missionary and American Education Societies, is not to be ascribed wholly or chiefly to a preference of church organizations, in themselves considered. The scruples of most, in regard to conducting benevolent operations on the voluntary plan, might

probably have been lulled to sleep, if the proscribed societies had not been supposed to exert an influence in spreading opinions disliked by the Old School, and to have had a practical effect in changing majorities in the church judicatories. The strength of opposition to the different societies patronized by portions of the Presbyterian church, is manifestly proportioned to the extent in which they are believed to diminish the relative power of the dominant party; as appears from the degree of favor bestowed on some in comparison with others. Enough has now been said to exhibit in its due weight the influence of the cause here considered, in contributing to form a majority in the Assembly for abrogating the Plan of Union and for adopting the consequent measures.

# CHAPTER IX.

## DIFFERENCE IN THEOLOGY BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW SCHOOL.

Adam, the head of our race.

A THIRD cause concerned in uniting a majority of the General Assembly of 1837 in the measures adopted by that body, may be found, as already stated, in the judicial proceedings of the church, growing out of a real diversity of doctrinal views.

In order to unfold the operation of this cause, it will be necessary to shew, in what the diversity consists; and to give some account of the proceedings to which reference is here made. The difference of theological sentiment between the Old School and New School parties, is, in many respects, of a marked character. It may not, however, be easy to exhibit their views on controverted points, so as to make visible every shade of distinction; but it will not be a difficult matter to draw the prominent features of the two schemes, in such a manner as to make them duly recognized, and render their difference apparent.

It is a favorite doctrine of the Old School, that God constituted Adam properly and truly, the head

and representative of our race, and, with him, as such, entered into covenant; that our first parent, acting in behalf of all his posterity, involved them in the guilt of his transgression, so that, *for his act*, they became justly liable to eternal death. Some explain this participancy in guilt and liability to punishment, to be by imputation; on the ground, that God might appoint Adam to act for his descendants, and hold them really responsible for his acts, and treat them according to his deserts. Others maintain, that his posterity *acted with him* in his transgression, and thus involved themselves in the ruin of his fall.

Closely allied to the doctrine just stated, is another respecting the nature and extent of the atonement. God, say they, entered into covenant from eternity with his son Jesus Christ, to save a part of our race, on condition that he should suffer the punishment due to their sins; Christ, in making an atonement, literally bore the penalties of the law in his own person, and, by the full payment, in an adequate amount of suffering, of the debt due to divine justice, purchased the redemption of the elect: they alone were embraced in the covenant of grace, and his righteousness becomes, by imputation, really and truly theirs, through faith. Some who adopt this view of the nature and extent of the atonement, admit its sufficiency for the *non elect*, if so

intended; but as they are not included in the covenant, the atonement can be regarded in no proper sense, as being made on their account. They cannot, therefore, share in the regenerating grace of God, nor partake of the benefits of Christ's death.

Another sentiment nearly connected with the doctrine first mentioned, is, that mankind, having lost the divine image in their transgression and fall with Adam, and being born into the world with a constitution morally depraved, have no ability, *in any sense*, either to obey the command of God, or to comply with the conditions of salvation in the gospel. The power to right moral action having been destroyed by the fall, is communicated only by sovereign grace. Hence, regeneration is an effect of the Spirit's operations, in which man is entirely passive; as much so as in his original creation.

This scheme of course embraces peculiar views respecting moral agency. It makes man responsible for actions not his own, and lays him under obligation to do, what he is acknowledged to have no ability to perform. It also affects the nature of divine influence. Man being physically depraved, undergoes, in regeneration, a physical change, which is wrought by creative omnipotence. It likewise resolves the moral government of God into a system of divine operations, having their reasons in divine

sovereignty, without a suitable regard to the nature of moral beings, and to the moral relations which exist in the universe. Its practical tendency is, in some measure, that of Antinomianism, in regard to the obligation and duty of sinners, and the influence of truth on the mind.

This representation of the doctrines which distinguish the Old School, it is believed, will correctly apply to the majority of that party in the Presbyterian church, who regard the New England doctrines as heretical, and who, for the last few years, have been actively engaged in exposing and eradicating, what they consider, fundamental error. Their system of orthodoxy, if correctly understood, includes, as essential, the three principal points above stated, with their explanations; and also, by implication, the other views subjoined. The system, however, is differently modified by different individuals. Points of fundamental importance in the view of some, are by others regarded less important; while there is considerable diversity in the mode of explaining doctrines, amongst those who agree in the manner of stating them.

The doctrinal belief of the New School may be learned from the writings of distinguished individuals of that class of divines, as well as from documents drawn up in the form of articles of faith, and from statements and explanations made before the

judicatories of the church. Perhaps, however, no better abstract of their doctrines can be given, than one taken from the protest of the minority of the Assembly of 1837, on the subject of doctrinal errors.*

In respect to our connection with Adam they hold, that he was so constituted "the head and representative of the race, that, as a consequence of his transgression, all mankind become morally corrupt, and liable to death, temporal and eternal." Thus the posterity of Adam have "a natural bias to evil resulting from the first apostacy, which leads invariably and certainly to actual transgression;" but "the sin of Adam is not imputed to his posterity, in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities, acts, and demerit."

In regard to the atonement they hold, that the sufferings and death of Christ were truly vicarious, or a suitable substitute for the punishment due to transgressors; and, though not the literal penalty of the law, were in the view of infinite wisdom a full equivalent, so that by virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice, overtures of mercy are sincerely made to the whole race, and salvation secured to all that believe, solely on the ground of the righteousness of Christ.

* Minutes of the Assembly of 1837, p. 484.

Man, an accountable agent.

They also hold, that "sinners have all the faculties necessary to a perfect moral agency and a just accountability;" but such is their love of sin and opposition to God and his law, that, "they never will comply with the commands of God, independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit; and that by His special operations in regeneration, the will of the sinner is determined to that which is good, so that he freely embraces the gospel."

This scheme is substantially that of Edwards and the New England divines.* It acknowledges man as a moral agent, and views him as so acting under the government of God, that, though naturally inclined to evil, his voluntary disobedience to the divine law, is the only just ground of his condemnation; and that no violence is offered to his will in any divine influences which are exerted

* Edwards held in a different sense the doctrine of imputation. "The imputation of Adam's first sin," he regarded as "the liableness or exposedness of Adam's posterity, in the divine judgment, *to partake of the punishment of that sin.*" (Works, Edition 1809, vol. vi, p. 130.) He accounts for the justice of their punishment, on the ground, that they were one with Adam, as the branches with the root, or the members with the head. "*The first existing* of a corrupt disposition in their hearts," is, as it were, "*the extended pollution*" of his first act, or "the inherence of the sin of the head" in the members, in their consent and concurrence with the head in that first act. p. 437. The Princeton divines, as well as the New School, reject this view of imputation.

upon him. It is easy to see that the difference of views between the Old and New School, on the points of doctrine which have now been referred to, will, in various respects, modify their whole creed; and it is not surprising, that under certain excitements, it should occasion in the Old School serious apprehensions for, what they regard, "the faith once delivered to the saints." On the other hand, it is not to be wondered at, that they who hold the tenets of the New School should attack, with warmth, the peculiar dogmas of that theology which teaches a limited atonement, participancy in the guilt of Adam's sin, and natural inability to love and obey God.

The discussion of these subjects in past years, has resulted in the progress of the theological views maintained by the New School. The publication of the Triangle, whatever may be thought of its spirit and mode of attack, did much in the city of New York and elsewhere, to render the doctrines which it opposed unpopular, and to advance New England sentiments. The preaching and writings of several distinguished ministers of New England origin, together with the introduction of others into the Presbyterian church, were productive of similar results; and there was a gradual approach towards a transfer of power and influence, from one to the other side in the controversy. So long, how-

ever, as the Old School party experienced no such sensible diminution of relative numbers as to cause them to fear the loss of their ascendency, they exercised a good degree of patience and forbearance towards their brethren of the New School. But when the control of affairs was likely to pass from their hands, they became greatly alarmed for their peculiar orthodoxy. The importance of their distinguishing tenets became magnified in their own minds, and the reputed errors of their opponents, which were once tolerated, now assumed the frightful form of dangerous and hideous heresy. The faith once delivered to the saints must be defended, in such a manner as to secure the desired pre-eminence.

The first Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, ranking in theological sentiment with the New School, occupied a commanding position, and was an object of importance to be gained, if possible, to the other side. Its pastor, the Rev. James P. Wilson, D. D., was about to retire from the field of his labors, and a successor was needed. The eyes of the congregation were turned to the Rev. Albert Barnes, of Morristown, New Jersey, whose ministrations had recently been attended by one of the greatest revivals of religion ever known in this country. Mr. Barnes had preached a sermon entitled "The Way of Salvation," which, in the be-

ginning of the year 1830, was printed, and soon after circulated among the electors of the first church, by some of the members who designed to call him to become their pastor. The sermon was reviewed by a member of the presbytery of Philadelphia of opposite views, who urged objections against its doctrines. Dr. Wilson wrote in its defense; and, in several articles published on each side, the doctrines of the discourse were fully discussed.

In the mean time, the first Presbyterian church proceeded to give Mr. Barnes a unanimous call; and the question then came before the presbytery of Philadelphia, whether the call should be allowed to be prosecuted before the presbytery of Elizabethtown, of which Mr. Barnes was a member. The sermon was made the sole ground of opposition, and after nearly four days were spent in discussion, the presbytery decided by a large majority in favor of prosecuting the call. These proceedings took place in April, 1830. In June following, Mr. Barnes presented to the presbytery of Philadelphia, a certificate of dismission and recommendation from the presbytery of Elizabethtown. His opponents being frustrated, as has been shewn, in their first attempt, were not satisfied, but undertook to prevent his admission to the presbytery, and his installation over the church to which he had been

unanimously called. An unsuccessful effort was made to procure the postponement of a motion to admit him a member, until he had been publicly examined in regard to his disputed doctrinal sentiments. A written statement of his views, however, was presented to the presbytery, designed to satisfy those who were suspicious of his orthodoxy; and, after much discussion and one previous adjournment, he was finally received by a vote of nearly two-thirds in his favor. On the 25th of June, Mr. Barnes was inducted into his present charge. His opponents preferred a complaint to the synod of Philadelphia against the proceedings of the presbytery, and were referred back with an injunction to the presbytery, "to hear and decide on their objections to the orthodoxy of the sermon of Mr. Barnes, and to take such order on the whole subject, as is required by a regard to the purity of the church and its acknowledged doctrines and order." The friends of Mr. Barnes in the presbytery, insisted that the complainants were accusers, and, therefore, were not to be judges in the matter referred by the synod. On the other side it was claimed, that the *sermon* was the subject of complaint, and that no process was instituted against its *author*. On this ground the presbytery proceeded, and a majority adopted a minute as the "final decision," severely censuring the sermon, and reflecting on the theological senti-

ments of Mr. Barnes. They also appointed a committee to communicate to him the result of the deliberations of the presbytery, and to converse with him, with the view of procuring a renunciation of his alledged errors. The proceedings were complained of by the minority, to the General Assembly of 1831, and the subject was referred to a committee of that body, of whom Dr. Miller was the chairman. The committee recommended the adoption of resolutions in substance as follows: that the presbytery of Philadelphia were not actuated by improper motives in their proceedings in the case of Mr. Barnes, and that his sermon contains a number of unguarded and objectionable passages; yet, especially after the explanations given by him of those passages, the presbytery ought to have suffered the whole to pass without further notice; and ought now to suspend all further proceedings in the case; and that, for the promotion of peace, regular steps should be taken to divide the presbytery.* The report of the committee was adopted by nearly a unanimous vote, and the Assembly immediately united in an act of special prayer and thanksgiving, in view of the happy result.

* The presbytery was divided by an act of the Assembly of 1832, the synod having refused to do it.

Duffield on regeneration.

The auspicious termination, as it was believed, of this unhappy affair, gave the friends of peace sanguine expectations of union and harmony; or, at least, of forbearance and christian charity. But the contest begun, had too much of principle involved in it, to say nothing of other motives by which the leaders may have been actuated, to allow the Old School to settle down in quiet and make no further resistance to New School men and their theology. The progress of reputed error must be arrested, or consequences would follow greatly to be deprecated by a party in the Presbyterian church. No one was yet prepared to come forward directly, in the manner prescribed in the constitution, as the accuser of his brethren. The object aimed at was to obtain a condemnation of the theological opinions of such men as Mr. Barnes, through their published writings, public sentiment not now being prepared to sustain a process of discipline against the individuals themselves.

In February or March, 1832, the Rev. George Duffield, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Carlisle, published a book, entitled "Spiritual Life or Regeneration, illustrated in a series of disquisitions, relative to its Author, subject, nature, means, &c." Extensive and powerful revivals of religion had previously occurred in a large number of the churches within the bounds of the presbytery of Carlisle, in-

Examined by committee of presbytery.

cluding that under the care of Mr. Duffield. The work on Regeneration was occasioned, in part, by this circumstance, and contained an exhibition of the doctrines, which, in New England and elsewhere, have been made, through the operations of the Spirit, a means of the conversion of sinners.

Immediately after the appearance of the book, extracts and comments were published simultaneously in a political paper in Carlisle, and in "The Presbyterian." The sentiments advanced were represented as Socinian, Pelagian, Arminian, Pantheistical, Atheistical, &c. In April, 1832, "Duffield on Regeneration," was introduced to the consideration of the presbytery of Carlisle, and a committee was appointed to examine the work, and to make report on its doctrines. The committee reported various errors, such in substance as the following: that Adam stood in the relation of a parent only to his posterity, and not as their federal head and representative; that there is no imputation of *legal punishment* on account of Adam's first sin, and that the death of infants is the mere natural result or consequence of his sin, in virtue of their connection with him as a parent only; that there is no principle of holiness or sin inherent in the soul, which is the proper cause of moral action, and that all holiness or sinfulness is actually acquired by an exercise of the will; that infants have *no moral char-*

*acter;* that the inability of sinners to believe, repent, &c., is wholly that of the will, and does not consist in a depravity of nature propagated from Adam to his posterity, which renders man unable to perform holy exercises, "till some new principle or power of action is communicated to the mind itself, in regeneration, by the Holy Ghost, so curing the depravity of his faculties;" that regeneration consists in a voluntary act of faith under the influence of moral suasion only, and that the soul is *active, not passive,* in regeneration; that election is nothing else than the actual conversion of men to God; and that the human nature of Jesus Christ, possessed no personal characteristic holiness, irrespective of, or previous to, his moral acts and exercises. Other errors were imputed to the book, and to some of those above specified, worse features were given than is here represented; but the reader will correctly perceive from this specimen, what was the character of the doctrines condemned.* The presbytery received and acted upon the report of the committee at an adjourned meeting in June. It "declared the doctrines contained in the book, as presented in the report of the committee, to be

* Extracts from the report of the committee as published in a pamphlet, entitled "A cursory examination of the Carlisle Presbytery's Review of Duffield on Regeneration."

erroneous, and contrary to the doctrines of the bible and the standards of the church," and solemnly warned its ministers, elders, and people, "to guard against such distracting and dangerous errors." Mr. Duffield opposed the process against the book, and carried up a complaint to the synod of Philadelphia, in Oct. 1832. The synod entertained the complaint, and acted on it so far as to read the documents and hear the parties; and then, on motion of Dr. Junkin, dismissed the case with an injunction to the presbytery of Carlisle, to commence process against Mr. Duffield. The presbytery immediately met, and appointed a committee to prepare charges, after which it adjourned to November. The committee being unwilling to take the responsibility of personal accusers, instituted process on the ground of common fame and the injunction of the synod. The charges consisted of ten specifications, embracing the errors set forth in the report of the former committee of the presbytery, but expressed in amended language and more guarded terms. At length, in April, 1833, the case came on for trial, and the accused put himself on his defense. Mr. Duffield challenged several members of the presbytery, but it decided that all its members present were competent to sit as judges. Against this decision, Mr. Duffield entered an appeal to the General Assembly. After preliminary

matters were adjusted, the trial went on; and, as the result, the presbytery decided that the accused was guilty of eight out of the ten specifications. The highest vote in the affirmative was twelve, the presbytery consisting, as first constituted for the trial, of thirty-seven members. The final decision in the case was, "That presbytery at present do not censure him any further than warn him to guard against such speculations as may impugn the doctrines of our church; and that he study to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Complaints and appeals were entered on both sides to the General Assembly of 1833, but they were never prosecuted. Mr. Duffield was determined, for the sake of peace, to let the subject rest, unless compelled to do otherwise, where the presbytery had left it.

The synod of Philadelphia, on account of the dangerous illness of Mr. Duffield at the time of its next meeting in October, 1833, omitted to review the doings of the presbytery in his case; but the subject was taken up the following year, and censure passed upon the presbytery for the lenity of its final decision.

It hardly need be said, that the charges against Mr. Duffield's book, in various respects misrepresent his real sentiments. This was abundantly shewn in the course of the proceedings against him,

and will appear from an examination of the book itself. His views are not different, in general, from those of his brethren of the New School, whose system of doctrines has already been described; nor from those of most of his Congregational brethren in New England.

# CHAPTER X.

## ACCOUNT OF VARIOUS MEMORIALS.

### Matters of complaint.

To the General Assembly of 1834, was presented "A memorial on the present state of the Presbyterian church." The circular which accompanied this memorial was signed by nineteen ministers and twenty-three elders, mostly belonging to the synod of Cincinnati. The memorial had been adopted in whole or in part, by eight or ten presbyteries and as many sessions; and was signed by about twenty ministers and one hundred elders. Its complaints related to the Plan of Union of 1801; the adoption of the standards with the right of explanation or for substance of doctrine; the ordaining of men by presbyteries to preach and administer the ordinances in other parts of the church; the countenance and support given by the General Assembly to the American Home Missionary Society and other voluntary associations; and the proceedings of the Assembly of 1831, in the case of Mr. Barnes, and of that of 1832, in dividing the presbytery of Philadelphia. It also remonstrated and testified against the following errors, declared to be

held and taught within the bounds of the Presbyterian church.

"1. That Adam was not the covenant head or federal representative of his posterity, and sustained no other relation to them than that which subsists, between every parent and his offspring.

"2. That we have nothing to do with the first sin of Adam more than with the sin of any other parent; and that it is not imputed to his posterity.

"3. That infants have no moral character; that they are neither sinful nor holy.

"4. That all sin consists exclusively in voluntary acts or exercises, and consequently that there is no innate, inherent, or derived corruption in the souls of fallen men.

"5. That man in his fallen state is possessed of entire ability to do whatever God requires him to do, independently of any new power or ability imparted to him by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.

"6. That regeneration is essentially a voluntary change which the soul is active in producing, and that the Holy Spirit acts only mediately in the way of moral suasion by the presentation of motives.

"7. That Christ did not become the legal substitute of sinners; did not pay the debt of his people or endure the penalty of the law in their behalf.

"8. That the Atonement is merely an exhibition of the wrath of God against sin; an expedient for enabling God to forgive sin consistently with the welfare of the universe, of itself not securing the salvation of any one, and not satisfying divine justice: and

"9. That the Atonement is general, made for all men alike, as much for the non-elect as the elect."

In proof of the existence of these sentiments, reference was made to Barnes's sermon on the Way of Salvation, to Duffield on Regeneration, and to sermons of Drs. Beecher and Beman.

The Memorial was referred to a committee who reported a series of resolutions, in general, opposed to the views of the memorialists. The resolutions, amongst other things declared, that this Assembly cannot sanction the censure contained in the Memorial against proceedings and measures of former General Assemblies: That it bears solemn testimony against publishing to the world, ministers in good and regular standing, as heretical and dangerous, without being constitutionally tried and condemned: and "That it is deemed inexpedient and undesirable to abrogate or interfere with the Plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the new settlements, adopted in 1801." On the subject of doctrinal errors, the following resolution was proposed; "that in the opinion of this Assembly, to

take up and try and condemn any printed publication as heretical and dangerous, is equivalent to condemning the author as heretical; that to condemn heresy in the abstract, cannot be understood as the purpose of such a trial; that the results of such trial, are to bear upon and seriously to affect the standing of the author; and that the fair and unquestionable mode of procedure is to institute process against the author, and give him a fair and constitutional trial."

The report of the committee was adopted by a considerable majority of the Assembly. The minority were greatly dissatisfied with the action upon the Memorial, as well as with other proceedings of the Assembly. A meeting was called in Philadelphia, to which all those ministers and elders were invited, who sympathized with the minority in their opinions and feelings. The result of this meeting was the publication of the "Act and Testimony," addressed to the ministers, elders and private members of the Presbyterian church; a document which in the ecclesiastical history of the times, has obtained great notoriety. It represents the church as having arrived at a solemn crisis, in which the minority are constrained to appeal to its members "in relation to the alarming errors which have hitherto been connived at, and now at length have been countenanced and sustained by the acts of the supreme judicatory of the church." It testifies

against various alledged errors in doctrine, similar to those condemned in the case of Duffield, and complained of in the Memorial to the Assembly; against the compromising spirit, and laxity in administering discipline, manifested in the judicatories of the church; and against various departures from Presbyterial order and church government, extensively practiced, and sanctioned by the highest authority. In conclusion, the Act and Testimony recommends to the churches, "to refuse to give countenance to ministers, elders, agents, editors, teachers, or to those who are in any other capacity engaged in religious instruction or effort," who hold "the heresies" which it condemns; to subject such persons, especially if they are ministers, to the just exercise of discipline by the proper tribunal; to use all proper means to restore the discipline of the church, and to prevent the introduction of new principles into the system. To carry these objects into effect, it recommends that the judicatories of the church and its officers, who approve of the Act and Testimony, give a public expression of their adherence to it; and that a convention of ministers and elders, be held in Pittsburgh, previous to the next session of the General Assembly, to be composed of two delegates, a minister and elder, from each presbytery or from the minority of any presbytery who may concur in its sentiments. This document produced

Biblical Repertory on the subject.

much sensation throughout the Presbyterian church, and except by the party from whom it originated, was regarded with strong disapprobation.

An article appeared in the Biblical Repertory, said to be from the pen of one of the professors at Princeton, in which decided ground was taken against it. "We have now performed," says the writer in conclusion, "a painful, though as we think an imperative duty. We have come out openly against brethren in whose doctrinal views we coincide, whose persons we love, whose character and motives we respect, with whom we have ever been associated and fondly hope ever to be united."

The convention met at Pittsburgh as was recommended. It was composed of forty-seven ministers and thirty-eight elders. Its President was Rev. Ashbel Green, D. D., and its Vice President, Rev. John Witherspoon.

As the result of their deliberations, a memorial was presented to the General Assembly of 1835, setting forth their grievances and earnestly petitioning for redress. The errors and irregularities complained of by the memorialists, were, with some additions, substantially the same with those which were presented to the preceding Assembly, and which were before noticed.

The General Assembly of 1835, contained a majority of Old School members. The Memorial of

the convention was received and referred to a committee of which Dr. Miller was chairman. The report of the committee embraced resolutions somewhat in accordance with the views of the memorialists, but did not, however, recommend all the measures by them proposed. The committee declared it to be the first duty of the Presbyterian church to sustain her own Boards, yet that it is not expedient to attempt to prohibit within her bounds, the operations of the Home Missionary Society, or of the Presbyterian Education Society, or any other voluntary association, not subject to her control. They also recommended the repeal of the Plan of Union of 1801, and on the subject of doctrinal errors, proposed the following resolution; "That while this General Assembly has no means of ascertaining to what extent the doctrinal errors alleged in the memorial to exist in our church, do really prevail, it cannot hesitate to express the painful conviction that the allegation is by no means unfounded, and at the same time to condemn all such opinions, as not distinguishable from Pelagian and Arminian errors, and to declare their judgment that the holding of the opinions referred to is wholly incompatible with an honest adoption of our confession of faith. Against the doctrinal opinions therefore above alluded to, the Assembly would solemnly lift a warning voice, and enjoin upon all our presbyte-

ries and synods to exercise the utmost vigilance against the introduction of such pestiferous errors."

The proposed resolutions, having received several important modifications and amendments, were adopted; and the decisions of the former Assembly in regard to some of the leading points in controversy, were reversed. The right of presbyteries to examine those who apply to them for admission, with credentials from other presbyteries, and of judicatories to censure printed books, without process instituted against their authors, was acknowledged; the principle of elective affinity in the formation of presbyteries and synods was condemned; the repeal of the Plan of Union, was proposed for the consent of the General Association of Connecticut, and above all, the doctrinal errors alleged to be prevalent in the church, were pronounced to be of a dangerous and pestiferous character.

The Old School party believing themselves to have gained a signal triumph in the General Assembly, confidently expected to make a successful use of it in suppressing the sentiments which the highest judicatory of the church had virtually branded with the name of heresy. The leaders in the ranks of opposition to New School theology, hoped now to be able to carry through severe measures of discipline against the prominent advocates of these views; and by this means to check the alarming

progress of the doctrines and prevent their ascendency.

For several months, the Rev. Lyman Beecher, D. D., President of Lane Seminary, had stood accused of heresy, &c. in charges tabled against him by the Rev. Joshua L. Wilson, D. D., and was awaiting his trial before the presbytery of Cincinnati. Mr. Barnes had also been arraigned before the second presbytery of Philadelphia, by Rev. George Junkin, D. D., President of La Fayette College, late the sole member of one of the presbyteries of the Associate Reformed Synod; now one of the foremost defenders of high church orthodoxy in the Presbyterian church. He too was soon to be tried, and the result of these two cases seemed about to settle the question whether New England sentiments, or New School theology, should any longer enjoy toleration.

The trial of Dr. Beecher commenced the 9th of June, 1835, and that of Mr. Barnes on the 30th day of the same month. That the reader may understand the precise points at issue in these cases, the several charges will be given in the next chapter, and a general view of the proceedings presented. The trial of Mr. Barnes will be first noticed.

# CHAPTER XI.

## TRIALS OF REV. A. BARNES, AND REV. L. BEECHER, D. D., FOR HERESY.

### Charges against Mr. Barnes.

In the prosecution against Mr. Barnes, he was charged with *maintaining*, "That all sin consists in voluntary action; that Adam was ignorant of his moral relations to such a degree, that he did not know the consequences of his sin would reach any further than to natural death; that unregenerate men are able to keep the commandments and convert themselves to God; and that faith is an act of the mind and not a principle, and is itself imputed for righteousness." He was also charged with *denying*, "that God entered into covenant with Adam, constituting him a federal or covenant head and representative to all his natural descendants; that the first sin of Adam was imputed to his posterity; that mankind are guilty, i. e. *liable to punishment*, on account of the sin of Adam; that Christ suffered the proper penalty of the law, as the vicarious substitute of his people, and thus took away *legally* their sins and purchased pardon; and that the righteousness, i. e. the active obedience of Christ to the

law, is imputed to his people for their justification, so that they are righteous in the eye of the law and therefore justified." The Notes to the Epistle to the Romans were made the ground of these charges. To these charges Mr. Barnes replied, that some of the doctrines in question he held and some he did not; but that he held and taught nothing contrary to the word of God, and denied none of the truths taught in the scriptures. His defense shews, that he holds the system of doctrines which were before ascribed to the New School. He regards man as an agent, capable of obeying the law of God, and sin as a transgression of that law. He considers the inability of man not as physical but as moral, consisting in a total aversion of the will to that which is good; an aversion so strong as never to be overcome but by the influences of the Holy Spirit. He maintains, that in consequence of the sin of Adam, the whole race become sinners, and that on account of the atonement of Christ, alone, they who believe are justified through faith. But it is unnecessary to enter into a more particular explanation of his views. However they may be misrepresented by his accusers, they will not be misunderstood by New England divines.

The presbytery, after a full hearing of the case, judged the charges not sustained, and acquitted Mr. Barnes of having taught dangerous errors or

heresies, contrary to the word of God and the standards of the church. The vote was fifteen to three, the latter number including one minister and two elders.

From the judgment of the presbytery Dr. Junkin appealed to the synod of Philadelphia, which met in Oct. 1835. By an act of the preceding Assembly, the synod of Delaware, to which the presbytery belonged, had been dissolved, and the presbytery annexed to the synod of Philadelphia. Regarding this act as unconstitutional, the presbytery refused to yield up its records to the synod; and though Mr. Barnes professed himself ready for trial on his part, he could not consent to put himself on his defense while the proper documents in the case were wanting. The synod, therefore, proceeded with his case without his appearance as a party. It reversed the decision of the presbytery, adjudged Mr. Barnes to be guilty of heresy, and suspended him from the exercise of all the functions proper to the gospel ministry. On the resolution for suspension, one hundred and sixteen voted in the affirmative, thirty-one in the negative, and eight were not included. Mr. Barnes gave notice of an appeal, and the case went up for final adjudication to the General Assembly of 1836. In the mean time, he submitted to the decision of the synod, and suspended his appropriate labors as a christian minister. The

Assembly, after a full hearing of the parties, sustained the appeal and reversed the decision of the synod suspending Mr. Barnes, by a vote of one hundred and forty-five in the affirmative and seventy-eight in the negative, eleven members declining to vote.

Some account will now be given of the proceedings against Dr. Beecher. At the time of his call to the presidency of Lane Seminary, and to the professorship of theology in that institution, in February, 1831, he was pastor of the Bowdoin street church, in Boston. To the church and congregation under his care, a letter was addressed by a committee of the board of trustees, urging his peculiar qualifications for the station to which he was called, as a reason for his dismission from his charge and removal to Cincinnati. Of this committee, Dr. Joshua L. Wilson was chairman, and the letter bore his signature.

In September, 1832, Dr. Beecher was dismissed from his pastoral charge, and soon proceeded to the west, to enter his new field of labor. He left New England, in possession of the affection, confidence, and good wishes of his brethren, which he had so long enjoyed. On arriving at Cincinnati, he found that suspicions had been excited, and that he was likely to encounter opposition from a quarter in which it might least have been expected. Instead

of meeting that cordial reception from Dr. Wilson which he had anticipated, he found him prepared to withhold his confidence and cooperation. Dr. Wilson, it seems, had united with the trustees of Lane Seminary in giving him the call, with the belief that he would not accept the appointment; but being disappointed in the result, he resigned his seat in the board, and, on Dr. Beecher's arrival, was prepared to oppose his being received by the presbytery of Cincinnati. He, however, was received as a member; but the presbytery was soon called upon to take up charges against him, on the ground of general rumor respecting the unsoundness of his theology. But the existence of common fame was denied, and the subject was not taken up. The presbytery was next called upon to appoint a committee to examine his printed sermons, and report whether they contained doctrines at variance with the standards of the church. The presbytery refused to adopt this measure, and complaint was made to the synod of Cincinnati; but the synod dismissed it, on the ground that the presbytery was not obliged to act without a responsible prosecutor. Dr. Wilson then appealed to the General Assembly of 1834, but the judicial committee cast out the appeal, because he was not one of the original parties.

Failing to procure in this way the condemnation of Dr. Beecher's sentiments, Dr. Wilson, in No-

vember, 1834, commenced a prosecution against Dr. Beecher, on charges of heresy, slander, and hypocrisy; and in June, 1835, as before mentioned, the case was finally brought to trial. The charge of slander related to his misrepresenting the doctrines of the whole church on the subject of ability, as constituting the ground of obligation and guilt, and to his casting odium on the reformers and on those who adhere strictly to the standards of the Presbyterian church. That of hypocrisy related to his professing to adopt the standards of the church, while he disbelieves and impugns important points of doctrine. The points of doctrine on which the accusation of heresy was based, correspond in general with those before mentioned in the case of Mr. Barnes. The charges were, that he propagates doctrines contrary to the word of God and the standards of the church, on the subject of the depraved nature of man, and on the subjects of total depravity and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; and that he teaches the doctrine of perfection. The following are among the specifications. He teaches that the depravity of man is voluntary, and that the first sin of every man is free, and might have been and ought to have been avoided; that man is rendered capable by his Maker of obedience; that ability to obey is indispensable to moral obligation, and that to be able and

unwilling to obey God, is the only possible way in which a free agent can become deserving of condemnation and punishment; that all the Holy Spirit accomplishes in regeneration, is to make the sinner willing to submit to God; and finally, that perfectionists derive several cogent arguments from these doctrines.

Dr. Beecher in his defense maintained, that it is the doctrine of the confession of faith and of the bible, and has been the received doctrine of the church in all ages, that man is a free agent, in possession of such natural powers as are adequate to a compliance with every requirement of God, and that he lies under that impotency of will which consists in aversion from God, and is entirely dependent on the influence of the Holy Spirit, to begin, continue, and consummate the work of conversion; and that in consequence of Adam's sin, all his posterity, from the commencement of their moral existence, are destitute of holiness and prone to evil, so that the atoning death of Christ and the special renovating influence of the spirit, are indispensable to the salvation of any human being. In holding these views, therefore, he is not guilty of believing or teaching any thing contrary to the word of God or the standards of the Presbyterian church.

After a full hearing of the case, the presbytery voted by a majority of nearly two thirds, that the

Result of these trials.

charges were not sustained. From this decision, Dr. Wilson appealed to the synod of Cincinnati. The synod on hearing of the case, acquitted Dr. Beecher of entertaining views to justify any suspicion of unsoundness in the faith, and expressed the belief, that nothing insuperable existed to prevent his usefulness, or impair confidence in him as a minister of the gospel in the Presbyterian church. An appeal from this decision was taken by the prosecutor to the General Assembly of 1836, but was finally withdrawn at the earnest solicitation of many of the friends of Dr. Wilson.

The result in the two cases of discipline whose history has now been given, as well as other proceedings of an Assembly in which the New School had a majority, awakened new alarm in the ranks of the Old School party. The measures of discipline on which they had relied to suppress the reputed errors, had in a great measure failed. The doings and influence of the Assembly of 1835, were in a degree counteracted, something decisive must be accomplished in this crisis of affairs. The minority protested against the decision of the Assembly in the case of Mr. Barnes, and against most of its proceedings in reference to the subjects on which a difference of sentiment exists. They also took other measures to redress their grivances. A committee was appointed to correspond and deliberate

on the course proper to be pursued by them, in the present crisis of the Presbyterian church. After holding "extensive correspondence with ministerial and lay brethren in all parts of the church," such of course as were favorable to the views of the party, the committee recommended "that presbyteries friendly to the doctrines and institutions of the church, instruct their commissioners to the next General Assembly, to meet in Philadelphia on the second Thursday of May, together with such delegates as may be appointed by minorities of presbyteries, in order fully and freely to compare views, and to unite upon such constitutional measures of remedying existing evils, as it may be judged expedient to submit to the consideration of the Assembly." In accordance with this recommendation, the convention of 1837 held its meeting the week previous to the session of the Assembly, and prepared its "testimony and memorial" to that body. The subjects of complaint presented were three; doctrine, church order, and discipline. In relation to doctrine, the same errors were testified against, which had been the burthen of similar documents from the same quarter. To these, however, some new specifications were added, such as the following: "That God would have been glad to prevent the existence of sin in our world, but was not able without destroying the moral agency of

man; or, that for aught that appears in the bible to the contrary, sin is incidental to any wise moral system; that God has done all that he can do for the salvation of all men, and that man himself must do the rest; that God cannot exert such an influence on the minds of men as shall make it certain that they will choose and act in a particular manner, without impairing their moral agency; that the reason why some differ from others in regard to their reception of the gospel is, that they make themselves to differ." Most of these statements are intended to oppose a theory in regard to the permission of sin, which will be more particularly considered in another place. They show, however, that the theory in question was greatly misapprehended by the memorialists. The other specifications, for the most part, have been already sufficiently exhibited.

This memorial was the basis of the proceedings of the General Assembly of 1837. That body having a majority of the Old School party, many of whom were members of the convention, carried through the measures of reform recommended. The history of these measures it is not necessary here to repeat. They were sufficiently dwelt upon in the preceding chapters of this work. Nor is it necessary again to state the objects which they were designed to accomplish. With these, the im-

partial reader is sufficiently acquainted. They were undertaken as a last resort, after other expedients had failed; as a desperate attempt to compass the various ends at which the majority aimed. With many, the suppression of heretical opinions; at least, opinions deemed heretical, because differing in some important respects from their own, was the leading design; which no one will doubt, after becoming acquainted with the proceedings of the various judicatories of the church in relation to these opinions. The excited feelings occasioned by the collision of many minds in controversy on the disputed doctrines; the party documents circulated through the church at different times during a recent period; the continual newspaper warfare, which kept alive suspicion and fanned the flame of discord; the defeats and victories gained on one side and the other, and especially the failure to sustain the measures of the Assembly of 1835, and to fix the stigma of heresy on the sentiments of the New School, through the condemnation of their reputed errors, and to discipline and cast out of the church, Dr. Beecher and Mr. Barnes; these things combined, exerted a mighty influence in consolidating the ranks of the majority, and preparing even moderate men, to adopt the violent measures of the General Assembly of 1837. It required years of discipline, on the field of theological and ecclesias-

tical combat, to marshal the forces, and bring them to act with unity, energy, and decision, in accomplishing the work, which, through misapprehension, and prejudice, and passion, and the love of power, many perhaps thought themselves called upon in the providence of God, to undertake, and, without regard to consequences, to prosecute to its final and disastrous consummation.

# CHAPTER XII.

## THE NEW HAVEN CONTROVERSY.

Theological controversy in New England

THE reader of the foregoing pages, has not failed to notice the intimate connection, which has subsisted between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, in the United States, from the earliest period of their history, down to the present time. Indeed, so closely have they been associated, that their names, in the minds of many, are not distinguished from each other. In New England, it is not uncommon to hear Congregationalists called Presbyterians, and the doctrines and sins of the latter, charged upon the former, not by *imputation*, but on account of their supposed *oneness* as a denomination of christians.

In consequence of this intimate connection, the doctrinal discussions which have from time to time existed in New England, have found their way to a greater or less extent into the Presbyterian church. This circumstance has not only rendered the Old School men, in that communion, suspicious of the opinions and influence of their Congregational brethren; but has made them guard with watchful and

jealous care against the introduction, from this quarter, of supposed heresy. Hopkinsianism, at one period, excited their alarm to such a degree, as to receive the condemnatory sentence of a large and influential church judicatory; and, for the last eight or ten years, there has been an increasing suspicion and alarm, respecting certain alledged peculiarities of sentiment, advocated by some of the Professors of Yale College, and other divines, in various publications, particularly the Christian Spectator.

The errors imputed to the New Haven school, they have regarded as in a high degree heretical, and their prevalence in the Presbyterian church, as peculiarly subversive of her creed and destructive to her purity. These errors, they believed, were introduced through the Plan of Union, the American Education Society, and the American Home Missionary Society; and were rapidly extending, to the great prejudice, if not to the utter destruction, of Old School orthodoxy. Hence a fourth cause of the abrogation of the Plan of Union and of the other measures of the General Assembly of 1837, connected with it, may be found in the late theological controversies, which had their origin in Connecticut, and have prevailed throughout New England.

That several of the errors which the Assembly condemned, proceeded, in the view of the majority,

from this source, is abundantly proved by their own testimony. In the Memorial of the Convention of 1837, is found the following declaration. "It needs but a glance at the general character, the personal affinities, and the geographical relations of those who are antagonists in the present contest, to be satisfied that our present evils have not originated within, but have been brought from without." Again, "towards the churches of New England which stand fast in the faith once delivered to the saints, towards the distinguished and excellent brethren in the Lord in those churches which are testifying against the errors which are troubling *them*, as they are troubling us, we entertain the most fraternal esteem and affection." These sentiments are reiterated by the speakers of the majority in the Assembly, and echoed forth to the world in their circular letter addressed to all the churches. Hence it is evident, that the errors against which the convention testifies and which the Assembly condemns, are referred to New England origin, and are supposed to originate with the New Haven school. That this subject may be properly understood, it is necessary to give a general history of the late theological controversies of New England.

Soon after the establishment of the present Theological department of Yale College, some dark surmisings and suspicions were found to be afloat, that

the Professor of Didactic Theology in that institution, was unsound in the faith. It was whispered, in a certain quarter, that his views were tending to Unitarianism. These rumors produced little immediate impression, but served in some degree to awaken jealousy, and prepare the way for the belief of more serious and specious charges.

In 1826, the Professor of Divinity in Yale College, preached and published two sermons on the nature of sin, in which the doctrine is maintained, "that sin, in every form and instance, is reducible to the act of a moral agent in which he violates a known rule of duty."

According to this statement, as explained by the author, sin lies in some actual choice, some real volition, some definite use of his powers by a moral agent, in violation of his duty. A violation of duty implies a knowledge of the rule of duty violated, or a capacity in the agent of possessing such knowledge.

By "the act of a moral agent," the author does not however mean merely those imperative or executive acts of choice which immediately precede outward action. He considers it as embracing *permanent states* of the will, and regards these states or *controlling purposes* of the soul as constituting moral dispositions; or, in scriptural phrase, "the heart of man." In applying the doctrine in its bearing on

related truths, it is maintained "that, in the connection of Adam with his posterity, no sin of his is reckoned theirs;"* and that although man may be so affected at his origin in his constitution, as to render certain his commencing moral agency in sinful action, yet that nothing can with truth be called his original sin, but his first moral choice or preference being evil; which original determination of will or moral purpose, operates in addition to original susceptibilities, as a ground of his succeeding acts being sinful. While this view of sin denies, that we are, in the proper sense of these terms, guilty of Adam's sin, or punished on that account; it by no means disconnects our race from Adam, or represents the consequences of the fall to have been confined to our progenitor. The author on the contrary perfectly agrees with his illustrious predecessor, Dr. Dwight, in maintaining that the results of Adam's sin have come down to all his descendants, involving the whole race, as a certain consequence, in utter apostacy from God, and their total depravity from the commencement of moral action.

The mode in which the nature of sin was presented in these discourses, was at the time somewhat new to a part of the clergy of New England, and was at first received by many, in all its bearings

* Page 22.

and relations, with considerable hesitation. None, however, came forward publicly to controvert these opinions. A spirit of inquiry only was awakened, which led to careful investigation; and the result was, more definite views on the subjects of which they treated, than before prevailed.

In March and April, 1827, the sermons were reviewed in the Christian Advocate, published in Philadelphia, and edited by Dr. Green. This anonymous review has been by some ascribed to the editor, but by others to Dr. Alexander, of Princeton.

The reviewer denies the main position of the discourses, and labors to set aside the arguments by which it was supported. He contends that the *nature of the soul*, from which a continual succession of sinful acts proceeds, is itself sinful, and that this nature consists in "a state, or temper, or disposition of soul," previous to any voluntary action. When the law of God requires love, he says, "it virtually requires that state or temper or disposition of soul from which love proceeds, as a stream from its fountain."

He correctly states, that the author of the discourses agrees with him in maintaining, that the posterity of Adam have undergone a change in their constitution, in consequence of his fall, which renders their sinning certain; and that the single point in debate is, whether "the causes of the sinful

choices which exist in the disposition or temper of the soul itself, are sinful."* The reviewer expresses much concern for the interests of truth and religion in Yale College, laments that a system is promulgated there, by men called orthodox, subversive of the radical principles of Edwards, and insinuates that the institution is in danger of surrendering itself to the power of heresy.

This review was soon followed by a pamphlet from the pen of Professor Fitch, containing a full and clear exposition of the doctrines advocated in the discourses, and an able defense of the positions which he had taken. The writer states his object to be, "simply an inquiry into the nature of that in man which constitutes *the foundation* of guilt, and that all the questions fairly at issue, are only three; viz. Is moral disposition in man, resolvable into immanent preference? Does preference involve the the knowledge of obligation between moral opposites? Is there morality in any cause which lies back of moral preference, occasioning the certainty why the being chooses as he does?"† To the first two of these questions, he maintained an affirmative, to the latter a negative answer, and in establishing his positions thus, triumphantly vindicates, it is be-

* Christian Advocate, 1827, pp. 162, 163, 164.

† Inquiry into the Nature of Sin, p. 9.

Moral disposition resolvable into immanent preference.

lieved, the doctrines of the discourses from the objections of the reviewer. For, if moral disposition consists in immanent preference, then, that disposition which is the cause of all the subordinate or imperative acts of the will, is itself the *act* of a moral being; and if preference involves a knowledge of moral obligation between moral opposites, as surely it must, then a wrong preference is a violation of *known law*; and if, whatever be the causes of moral preference, occasioning the certainty of sin, there is nothing of a moral nature lying back of this preference, then it follows that *all* sin is reducible to the acts of a moral agent in which he violates known rules of duty.

The reader will here observe how the controversy, at the very commencement, went out into the Presbyterian church, and the suspicion of unsoundness in the faith was attempted to be excited against the New Haven school.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## CONTROVERSY BETWEEN DR. TAYLOR AND MR. HARVEY.

### What occasioned the Concio ad Clerum.

In 1828, the Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology in Yale College, preached his Concio before the clergy, assembled in the chapel on the evening of commencement. The circumstances in which that discourse originated were the following. The Rev. Hubbard Winslow, now of Boston, being employed as an agent to collect funds for the Professorship of Sacred Literature, presented the subject of his agency to the congregation in Fairfield, Ct. Mr. Winslow occupied the pulpit on the morning of the Sabbath. Rev. Nathaniel Hewit, (the former pastor of the church,) being present, was, by invitation, to preach in the afternoon; and at the close of the services, a collection was to be taken up, for the object that had been presented in the morning. Mr. Hewit in his discourse, made heavy charges against Dr. Taylor, and the theological school under his instruction. He represented him as heretical, respecting the nature and extent of depravity, and respecting regeneration, divine influence, de-

crees and election, and held him up as a Pelagian and Arminian. He represented the theological department as injurious to the college, and as a nuisance which ought to be removed. He commented on the discourse of Mr. Winslow, for the purpose of illustrating the heresy of the school. These representations he used as arguments to dissuade the people from contributing in aid of the Professorship of Sacred Literature; without, however, the designed effect.

Dr. Taylor was informed of these proceedings, and was requested by a leading member of the congregation, to occupy the pulpit for his own vindication and that of his pupils, one of whom was then preaching as a candidate in Fairfield. He prepared the sermon, afterwards preached as the Concio ad Clerum, and first preached it in Fairfield; expressly for the purpose of declaring his sentiments, by way of defense, against the unprovoked attack which had been thus publicly made upon him, and the department in which he instructed. These facts are mentioned, to shew the origin of the discourse which has occasioned so much controversy.

It originated in the necessity of defense, and not in a disposition to provoke discussion or to attack the theological opinions of others. It was preached on the evening of commencement, in the place of another previously prepared for the occasion, with

the hope and expectation on the part of the author, that this full and frank exhibition of his views, would prevent all further misunderstanding of his theological opinions. The subject of the sermon is the native depravity of mankind. It is the design of the author to show, *first*, in what the moral depravity of man consists; and, *secondly*, that this depravity is by nature.* By the moral depravity of mankind, he intends generally the entire sinfulness of their moral character; that state of the mind or heart, to which guilt and the desert of wrath pertains. For the sake of being explicit, he states negatively, that depravity does not consist in any essential attribute or property of the soul,—not

* In 1823, the same views of depravity as here maintained, were presented by Dr. Taylor, in a review of Professor Norton's Views of Calvinism; and they then met, as far as is known, the entire approbation of his brethren. His statement of the Calvinistic doctrine of depravity, in which he supposes Calvinists to agree, is as follows: "that all men, though complete moral agents, do, unless divine grace intervene, commit sin in their first and in every subsequent moral act." In accordance with this statement, Dr. Taylor represented president Edwards, when he speaks of propensity, tendency, proneness, liability, &c., as carefully limiting the import of the language to the single idea of *that* in the nature of man which will be certainly followed by sin. He does not assert that this propensity is in itself sinful and deserving of punishment, but simply, that it *tends* to, or is followed by, those moral acts, by which the subject becomes ill-deserving.

in any thing created in man by his Maker. Nor does it consist in a sinful nature which mankind have corrupted by being *one with Adam*, and by acting in his acts; nor in any constitutional, i. e. physical propensities of their nature; nor in any degree of excitement in those propensities not resulting in choice; nor in any disposition or tendency to sin which is the cause of *all* sin; but that it is *man's own act*, consisting in a free choice of some object rather than God, as his chief good;—or a free preference of the world and wordly good, to the will and glory of God.* This depravity is by nature; not that the nature, i. e. *constitution* of the soul, is itself sinful, or the physical or the efficient cause of men's sinning; but such is their nature that they will sin, and only sin, in all the appropriate circumstances of their being.† He expressly declares, however, that sin cannot be properly traced to these circumstances, but to the nature of man in any and all the circumstances appropriate to his existence. This should be particularly remarked, as his views on this subject were, subsequently, as well as before, very often misunderstood and misrepresented.

In the remarks which follow the discussion of the doctrine, some inquiry is made respecting the moral condition and salvation of infants. It is

* Concio ad Clerum, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8. † Do. page 14.

maintained that they sin as soon as they are moral agents, or as soon as they can sin, whether any one can tell the precise moment of the commencement of moral agency or not; and that, belonging to a race who in all the circumstances of their immortal being, without the grace of redemption, will sin, they may receive the supernatural grace of God's spirit, and be saved through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* In a note appended to the sermon, the difficulty of reconciling the depravity of mankind with the moral perfection of God, is attributed to two very common, but groundless assumptions; viz. that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead; and that God could, in a moral system, have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin.†

The Concio ad Clerum produced, at the time of its delivery, a lively interest amongst the clergy who heard it; and after its publication, some Congregational ministers who were accustomed to a different phraseology, or who attached a meaning to the language different from that of its author, regarded its sentiments with suspicion, as a departure from orthodoxy. At length, the Rev. Joseph Harvey, then pastor of a church in Westchester,

* Concio, pp. 23, 24. † Concio, p. 29.

Ct., published a review of the sermon, in which he, *first*, considers the nature of sin; and, *secondly*, the reason of its permission. As to the nature of sin, he maintains, in opposition to Dr. Taylor, that there is sin in man which is not his own act, i. e. native, sinful depravity, not consisting in choice or preference, and which is the efficient cause of all actual sin.* This he argues, *first*, from the fact, that every effect must have a cause, and the *assumption* that every efficient cause must be of the same nature with the effects which it produces; and, *secondly*, on the ground that infants, though incapable of *actual sin*, or the transgression of known law, are regarded in the scriptures, and treated by God, as sinners, guilty, and deserving of punishment.

In regard to the permission of sin, the reviewer attributes to Dr. Taylor the sentiment, that sin is on the whole a defect and an evil in the moral system of Jehovah, *which he could not prevent.* Assuming this to be Dr. Taylor's position, he goes on to argue that, as God prevents sin in some moral agents, he can in all without destroying their moral agency; and that the present system (including sin) is the best possible, and as such, was preferred by God to any conceivable system without sin.†

* Review, pp. 14, 17, &c. † Review, pp. 32, 35, 37.

As this subject will be more fully exhibited in another place, it would be superfluous here to present the points at issue in the question, or the arguments by which they are maintained.

In the Christian Spectator, for June, 1829, the Concio ad Clerum and the pamphlet of Mr. Harvey were ably reviewed.* The writer first takes up Mr. Harvey's position, that there is "sin in man which is not his own act," and inquires what it is of which men are thus guilty? Of the act of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit? This he presumes Mr. Harvey will not say. Of the act of God in making him what he is, antecedent to, and independent of, his own actions? This, no one will venture to affirm. What then remains? He cannot be charged with guilt or criminality for what others have done, nor for the bare fact of being what God has made him. It must, then, be for *acting*, and for his *own* act too, that any moral being can possibly be considered as guilty.†

* Some misrepresentations have been made respecting the authorship of this article. The facts are these. Dr. Porter, of Farmington, Ct., wrote a notice of the Concio for the Spectator, and before its publication, Mr. H.'s review appeared. Dr. P. being then occupied, requested of the editor of the Spectator, that a suitable notice of Mr. H. might be embodied in the review of the Concio. Prof. G. therefore inserted this part, and shaped the article accordingly.

† Christian Spectator, 1829, p. 347.

The writer then institutes an inquiry, as to the reasons why some Calvinistic divines, even of the present day, are betrayed into unguarded statements, like those of Mr. Harvey, on this subject. The principal reasons assigned, are the use of language belonging to an exploded theory; viz. that our whole race were in the view of God one with Adam, and that his sin in eating the forbidden fruit was the sin of each one of his descendants; the ambiguous use of the words, *source*, *fountain*, *disposition*, etc. which are sometimes used to denote constitutional properties of the soul and sometimes moral dispositions; the unfounded assumption that the cause of a given effect must have the same moral qualities or attributes as the effect itself, so that the certainty of man's entire sinfulness from the commencement of moral agency cannot be accounted for, without supposing a sinful nature or constitution of the soul. Mr. Harvey's reasonings are shewn to be based in these errors, and his argument for a sinful nature, aside from sinful action, is thus confuted.

After briefly considering Mr. Harvey's argument from scripture and from the condition of infants, the reviewer next passes to that part of the subject which relates to the theories respecting the permission of sin. To the question raised by Dr. Taylor in the note to his sermon; viz. for what reason has

Theories accounting for the permission of sin.

God permitted sin to enter the universe? he suggests three *possible* answers.

"1. God could not prevent its existence.

"2. Moral beings must, from the nature of the case, have the power of sinning; and there is no evidence that God could have overruled that power and entirely withheld them from its exercise, by a direct interposition of his providence, *and yet have sustained a moral system in existence.* Thus sin as to God's preventing—not our committing it,—is a necessary *incident* to a moral system.

"3. God chose that sin should enter the universe as the necessary *means* of the greatest possible good. Wherever it exists, therefore, it is, on the whole, better than holiness would be in its place. On this ground God permits its existence."*

The first solution is attributed to Dr. Taylor by Mr. Harvey, but without the least foundation. The whole tenor and reasoning of his note, shews that he was aiming at another point.

The third solution is the theory of Mr. Harvey, which the reviewer considers as having had no small share in creating the universal scepticism that prevailed in Europe, towards the close of the last century. The second solution is that which is suggested by Dr. Taylor as a possible, if not a satisfac-

* Christian Spectator, 1829, p. 378.

tory mode of accounting for the permission of sin. In comparing the two latter theories it is shewn, that they both admit the omnipotence of God, and his universal providence, agency, and government; and while both acknowledge the necessary existence of sin, so far as God's prevention of it is concerned, that they differ in one important respect; viz. the one places the ground of the necessity in the relation of sin as *a means of the greatest good*; and the other in the relation of a moral government to moral beings, who must of course be governed by motives, and be free to choose, in view of them, either good or evil. On the one theory, God chooses sin as a means of good, rather than holiness in its stead; on the other, he permits it to take place as incidental, in respect to divine prevention, to the best system possible to him. In the one case, sin is to be regarded as a good, because productive of good; in the other, as an evil which God sincerely desires should be prevented by the voluntary obedience of his subjects.

About the time of commencement in Yale College, in 1829, an anonymous pamphlet appeared, entitled "An Examination of a Review of Dr. Taylor's sermon, and Mr. Harvey's Strictures on that sermon." This has been commonly ascribed to Mr. Harvey, and the authorship has never been denied. In this he abandons the ground he had before ta-

ken respecting the nature of sin. He says that the doctrine of native depravity, does not involve or imply the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. It only regards the fact, that, in consequence of his transgression, all his posterity commence their existence in sin, being created in his *moral* likeness.* Accordingly he maintains, that mankind come into the world with "a voluntary state of the will" which is sinful, and which is derived by propagation from Adam. It is this "voluntary state of the will" which constitutes them sinners, and makes them deserving of punishment. Thus he now ascribes depravity to the will, and not, as formerly, to something *lying back of it*, in the structure of the soul itself. He assures us, that when Mr. Harvey asserted that nature is itself sinful, he only meant "that the moral state of man is sinful from his birth."† He also says that the *period of existence* in man, which is previous to a knowledge of law, is what is to be understood by the term *nature*, in the present discussion; and that the simple question is, whether, during this period, there is moral depravity in the human character.‡ On a comparison of these statements, therefore, it would appear, that, when Mr. Harvey before contended for "a nature which is itself sinful and the efficient cause

* Ex. pp. 6, 10. † Ex. p. 11. ‡ Ex. p. 12.

of sin," he meant that the *period* in infancy intervening between birth and a knowledge of law, is itself sinful and the efficient cause of sin; or, if the proposition were to be expressed in more intelligible language, he meant, perhaps, that previous to the commencement of moral agency, the will is in "a voluntary state" of transgression which is sinful, and that this state of the will is the cause of all subsequent and actual sin.

Mr. Harvey next examines what he calls the theories of Dr. Taylor and the reviewer, in respect to moral agency, the nature of sin, and the divine government. He understands them to mean by a moral agent, a being who has not only a rational soul with its essential attributes, but who *has acted* from a sense of right and wrong, or a knowledge of duty in the mind.* In opposition to this view of moral agency ascribed to them, he gives a definition, which, in all essential points, agrees with their real meaning. It is this. A moral agent is one who, possessing moral powers, can or does exercise those powers. Mr. Harvey, however, in his own mind evidently excludes one thing which is essential to moral agency. He appears not to regard the capacity of knowing a rule of duty, as necessary to the existence of complete powers of moral action.

* Ex. p. 30.

Dr. Dwight's view of the nature of sin.

Accordingly he maintains that, previous to such knowledge, mankind are sinners by having from their birth a wrong "voluntary state of the will." Of course, in his mind, sin is not the preference of some other object to God as the chief good. Such an act of the will, in his view, cannot constitute a permanent depravity and occasion moral conduct uniformly sinful. There must be some state of the mind or will, not consisting in choice or preference, to control the volitions and uniformly produce wrong moral action.

On the divine government, Mr. Harvey still understands Dr. Taylor and the reviewers, notwithstanding their explicit statement to the contrary, to teach that God wants natural power to prevent sin, and that moral agents are independent of his control. He, therefore, considers them as limiting the omnipotence of Jehovah.

Simultaneously with this pamphlet, appeared another, entitled, "An inquiry into the nature of sin, as exhibited in Dr. Dwight's Theology, by Clericus." This was from the pen of Dr. Taylor, and his design was to shew the agreement between himself and Dr. Dwight, in regard to the nature of sin. Their agreement on this subject, is founded in the fact, that both resolve all sin into *preference*. Dr. Dwight says, "sin universally is no other than selfishness, or a *preference* of one's self to all other

beings, and of one's private interests and gratification, to the well being of the universe; of God and the intelligent creation."* "Selfishness consists in the *preference* of ourselves to others, and to all others; to the universe and to God. This is sin; and all that in the scriptures is meant by sin."† "Man is the *actor* of his own sin. His sin is therefore wholly his own, chargeable only to himself; chosen by him unnecessarily, while possessed of a power to choose otherwise; avoidable by him; and of course guilty, and righteously punishable."‡ Other statements of his in regard to disposition as a cause of moral action; in regard to the moral image of God in which man was created; the natural ability of man to obey or disobey the law of God; and the nature of regeneration; properly interpreted, do not contradict the preceding declarations respecting the nature of sin. He is therefore to be understood, as agreeing on this subject with Dr. Taylor himself. Such is the main argument of the pamphlet under consideration.

To this was added a Postscript, in answer to the second pamphlet of Mr. Harvey. In this it was claimed that Mr. Harvey had abandoned the original ground of controversy, in making the main

* Ser. 100, Vol. III, p. 464. † Ser. 80, p. 162.
‡ Ser. Vol. I. p. 460.

Mr. H. admits a necessity for the existence of sin.

inquiry now to be, not whether there is in man a nature itself sinful, and the efficient cause of sin; but whether mankind are voluntary transgressors from their birth? This being the ground which he assumes, the difference of opinion now relates to trivial matters, and cannot long divide the parties who are opponents. The one maintains that infants sin, as soon as they can sin, and the other, that they can sin and do sin, as soon as they come into the world. It is also shewn that all which has ever been claimed by Dr. Taylor, in regard to the divine permission of sin, is, that it cannot be proved that God could, in a moral system, prevent a greater degree of sin than the present, by adopting a different system of influences from that which he adopts; a fact which is conceded by Mr. Harvey. He, however, represents Dr. Taylor as asserting that God could not prevent sin, in a moral system, without destroying the power to sin; and that moral agents, therefore, who possess the power, are independent of controlling influences exerted by God.

Thus far, the object has been, not only to state the principal topics which have been discussed, but to exhibit at considerable length, the arguments employed by the respective parties in the controversy. This has been done for the purpose of exhibiting to the reader, who has not had opportunity to examine the subject, the commencement, pro-

gress and state of the controversy as it existed, when the original champion in opposition to Dr. Taylor, retired from the field. From the view which has been taken, it appears, that the discussion hitherto has related mainly to a single point of doctrine, viz. what is the nature of sin? The Professor of Divinity in Yale College maintained, "that sin, in every form and instance, is reducible to the act of a moral agent in which he violates a known rule of duty." The Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology, carried out this doctrine in his investigation of the nature of the moral depravity of man. He referred it to man's own act, consisting in a free choice of some object rather than God, as his chief good; or a free preference of the world and worldly good to the will and glory of God. He shewed that this preference is a permanent sinful disposition, leading to all other acts of transgression. The conductors of the Christian Spectator, in defending these views, entered into the discussion of the question, what is the occasion of the universal preference in men of worldly good to God? They attributed it to the constitutional propensities of our fallen nature, not themselves sinful, which, in all the appropriate circumstances of our being, universally and invariably influence the mind to a choice of the wrong objects, as a chief good, and result in the entire moral depravity of mankind. These doctrines the Christian

Advocate and Mr. Harvey opposed. They maintained that there is sin which does not consist in the transgression of known law, but in the *nature* which the race derives from Adam. With one article the Christian Advocate gave over the controversy; and in a second, Mr. Harvey virtually yielded the point, and entered upon the new inquiry, whether men are sinners from their birth? The doctrine originally under discussion, therefore, seemed likely to be finally settled between Dr. Fitch, Dr. Taylor and the Christian Spectator on the one hand, and Dr. Green and his coadjutors and Mr. Harvey on the other. Whether the doctrine was thus settled, remains to be seen. Two questions of secondary importance, as there will be occasion hereafter to shew, assumed the prominent place and became the chief subject of dispute; viz. when do mankind begin to sin? and, what is the reason of the divine permission of sin? Before a further account of the discussion of these points is given, some notice must be taken of the commencement and progress of another branch of the controversy, which enlisted other pens in opposition to the New Haven sentiments.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## CONTROVERSY BETWEEN DR. TAYLOR AND DR. TYLER.

### Review of Spring on the means of regeneration.

In the successive numbers of the Christian Spectator for 1829, was published a review, by Dr. Taylor, of Spring on the means of regeneration.* After a favorable notice of the work in general, the reviewer expresses his regret that the author of the dissertation, has not rendered more apparent the consistency between the inculcation of immediate repentance, which he recommends, and the doctrine of the sinner's dependence; and states it as his object to exhibit this consistency, for the purpose of overthrowing the standing objection of many unrenewed men, that they have nothing to do, because all they shall do will be either vain or sinful; and of bringing the obligation and practicability of immediate duty, clearly before their minds.

A brief statement of the principal positions maintained in the review, is necessary to a proper exhi-

* A considerable part of this article, containing the fundamental principles of the discussion, it is understood, was read before its publication, to Dr. Spring, who expressed his opinion, that it ought to be published.

bition of the succeeding controversy. The following are the main points insisted on. The term regeneration, when used in respect to man as the subject of it, in a popular and general sense, includes all the acts of the understanding and of the will, which take place in the conversion of a sinner to God. In a restricted sense, as used by standard theological writers, and in which it is used by the reviewer, it is confined simply to the act of the will or heart, which consists in the *preference* of God to every other object, in distinction from the mental acts which are connected with it, and which in the order of nature, though not of perceptible time, precede it. This preference is the act of the sinner transferring, in view of truth and the motives which he contemplates, his affections from the world to God, as the object of his supreme regard; and is the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind. The change therefore, effected in regeneration, is not of a physical nature, but of a voluntary character; one in which man is active, as a moral agent, choosing in view of motives, God as his supreme good. This act, or exercise of the will or heart, constitutes a permanent and controlling moral disposition. The sinner in preferring the world to God, is a being supremely selfish. While the selfish principle remains the predominant and controlling disposition, the acts which are commonly

considered as constituting the use of the means of regeneration, are themselves sinful, and never do, and in the nature of things, never can produce the change. The selfish principle, however, is capable of being suspended; so that under the promptings of self-love, or the desire of happiness, which is an ultimate principle of our nature, neither sinful nor holy, the sinner contemplates God and the world as objects of choice, "substantially as they would be contemplated by a being who had just entered on existence, and who was called upon, for the first time, to select the one or the other as his supreme good." In other words, the supreme love of the world ceases, for the instant of time previous to the act of preferring God to the world, to confine thought and feeling exclusively to its object; and the constitutional desire of happiness influences the mind to a contemplation of truth and motives, which properly considered, are the means of regeneration in the limited signification of the term, as used by the reviewer. Those acts which are thus dictated by self-love or the instinctive desire of happiness, and which are prior to that act of the will or heart which is called regeneration in the restricted sense, constitute the sinner's using the means of grace. When these means are thus used, they become, in an indivisible moment, according to the laws of moral action, the occasion of a right act of the will

or affection of the heart. The suspension of the selfish principle does not change the moral character, or produce a state of neutrality; for, it is not till the affections are placed on God, by the last act in the process of regeneration, (when the term is used in its popular meaning, to include the entire series of of acts,) that such a change takes place. The mental acts, also, which constitute using the means of regeneration, and the moral act which is the result, are separated by no measurable duration; so that whenever regeneration is spoken of in the popular sense, the term includes the whole series of acts described, both mental and moral. This view of the subject, the reviewer claims, shews the way, and the only way, in which the immediate performance of duty is practicable by the sinner; and secures to the doctrine of dependence, its true practical influence on his mind. Thus the propriety of exhortations to immediate duty, in view of the sinner's dependence on the grace of God, is manifested; and the objection is removed, that he has nothing to do, because all he shall do, will be either vain or sinful.

On this review, "Strictures" were published by the Rev. Bennet Tyler, D. D., then pastor of a Congregational church in Portland. The main body of this pamphlet was written before the appearance of the concluding article of the review. The au-

thor in his preface professes to believe that the writer of the review, though he "has not formally denied any one doctrine of the orthodox system, has adopted principles, in his statements and explanations, which will lead, by inevitable consequence, to the denial of important doctrines; and that his speculations will pave the way for the gradual influx of error upon the American churches, disastrous to the interests of evangelical religion; and declares, that nothing but the dangerous tendency of these speculations, and the necessity of some counteracting influence, could have induced him to appear in this manner before the public."

In his introduction, though he says that he does not intend to insinuate, that the writer of the review has gone over to the ranks of Arminianism, he expresses his conviction, that there is no middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism; and intimates his serious apprehensions, that the reviewer has departed from the radical principles of the former, and is approximating to those of the latter. It is important that these statements be borne in mind by the reader, as he proceeds in the history of the discussion between Dr. Tyler and the writer of the review. The positions attempted to be maintained in the Strictures, will now be exhibited. The leading point contended for is, that sinners properly speaking, never use the means of

regeneration; that is, that no acts performed by the sinner antecedent to a change of heart, are means of effecting this change. The brief argument by which this point is decided, is the following. "If sinners use the means of regeneration they must use them with a holy heart, or an unholy heart, or no heart at all; that is, with right motives, or wrong motives, or no motives at all. If with right motives, the change is already effected, and the end precedes the means;—if with wrong motives, their actions are sinful, and sin is the means of holiness;—if with no motive at all, they act without design, and cannot be using means for the accomplishment of an end." "How, then," it is asked, as the conclusion, "can this scheme be maintained, without first denying the entire depravity of the unrenewed heart, and thus striking at the foundation of the doctrines of grace?"* Thus making motives synonymous with heart, which he uses to denote a voluntary state of the mind, Dr. Tyler, in a single syllogism, aims to overthrow the fundamental doctrine of the review; and to establish the position, that sinners never use the means of regeneration. He then proceeds to an examination of what he calls the theory of the reviewer, in regard to the sinner's using the means of regeneration. He

* Page 8.

first expresses his dissatisfaction with the use of the term regeneration, in its restricted sense, as used by Dr. Taylor, claiming that it should be used to denote the divine operation in renewing the heart.* He, however, afterwards says, that "in its popular import it denotes an instantaneous *change*; as instantaneous as the transition from darkness to light, or from death to life; as instantaneous as any voluntary act of the mind can be supposed to be; and in its theological import it cannot be understood in a more restricted sense."† He next attempts to point out a mistake of the reviewer, in regard to the nature of selfishness. He supposes that it consists in the supreme love of self; a principle of the heart which leads an individual to regard himself more than God; and his own interest and happiness more than all the universe beside; while the reviewer considers the principle here spoken of, as being itself the preference of the world to God as our chief good.‡ He then passes to his main object, the examination of the reviewer's theory in respect to using the means of regeneration. This he asserts, rests on a hypothesis unsupported by evidence, and contradicted by facts and the word of God. The hypothesis is, that the selfish principle is suspended antecedent to regeneration; and

* pp. 11, 12. † pp. 13, 14. ‡ pp. 14, 15.

that certain acts, dictated by self-love, constitute using the means of regeneration. He argues that there can be no such thing as the suspension of the selfish principle antecedent to regeneration; because the sinner is a selfish being, and no act dictated by selfishness has any tendency to subdue or to suspend selfishness. He then points out what he thinks a grand mistake of the reviewer, as to the radical distinction between holiness and sin. He understands him to maintain, that self-love or the desire of happiness, is the ultimate end of action in all moral beings. He considers this as destroying the radical distinction between holiness and sin; because both may be traced to the same principle of action. Holiness, he says, consists in benevolence or disinterested love; sin in supreme selfishness. In a holy being self-love is not a controlling principle; with the sinner it is; the former does not regard his own personal happiness as his ultimate end; with the latter, his ultimate end is his own personal happiness.*

Next, he attempts to shew that the reviewer has mistaken the true way of reconciling the doctrine of the sinner's dependence on God, and the obligation of immediate repentance. According to his view, the real difficulty with the sinner is a denial

* pp. 20, 21.

of his obligation; and this is removed by convincing him of his natural ability to repent, and shewing him that the fault lies in the perverseness of his will. According to the reviewer, the sinner, even after admitting his obligation, derives another objection from his dependence, viz. the hopelessness of success in the effort; and this objection can be removed only by shewing, that with a proper use of the means of regeneration, the work *may be* accomplished. Otherwise, the sinner must despair.

In the conclusion of the Strictures, Dr. Tyler proposes and discusses, with a view of deciding in the affirmative, the following queries; whether, according to the representations of Dr. Taylor, regeneration is not a progressive work; whether his theory does not involve the inconsistency of supposing that the heart is changed antecedent to regeneration; whether the sinner's conviction of sin, while using the means of regeneration as described, would not cease; whether this scheme does not dispense with the necessity of the divine influence in regeneration; whether it does not represent the sinner as laboring under a natural inability to do his duty; whether it does not deny the doctrine of sovereign, distinguishing grace; whether, if drawn out in detail and inculcated by the teachers of religion, it has not a tendency to stifle conviction of sin and produce spurious conversions. To these are added

a few remarks, in which Dr. Taylor is represented as teaching that the Spirit never operates directly on the mind, but only through the medium of truth or motives; and in which he is censured for what he has advanced respecting the manner of preaching the gospel.

The pamphlet closes with an appendix, designed to defend the positions before maintained by the writer against the final statements and explanations of Dr. Taylor, as made in the concluding part of the review, which was published after the main body of the Strictures was written. In this appendix, Dr. Tyler charges the reviewer with the inconsistency of maintaining, at one time, that regeneration is a gradual work, and again limiting it to an indivisible moment; that sinners cease to sin during the suspension of the selfish principle, and again, that during this period they still go on to sin. He further discusses the question in regard to the ultimate end of action, and insists more at large on the method of meeting the sinner's objection against the immediate performance of duty; but as no new positions of importance are taken, it is not necessary to give this part of the pamphlet a more particular notice.

The Strictures were reviewed by Dr. Taylor, in the Christian Spectator, for March, 1830. In maintaining his former positions, he shews that it is the

current language of theologians to speak of using the means of regeneration, and that the writer of the Strictures is peculiar and alone, in his denial of any such use. He examines the arguments by which Dr. Tyler attempts to overthrow this generally received doctrine. Dr. Tyler had attempted to show, by a three-fold impossibility, that sinners cannot use the means of regeneration. Dr. Taylor replies, then is moral agency subverted; since he who has neither a sinful heart, nor a holy heart, nor *any heart at all*, cannot be a moral agent. He concedes that sinners never use the means of regeneration with a holy heart, nor with an unholy or sinful heart; but denies that they do not use them with any heart at all. On the contrary, when they are required to love God with all *their* heart, it is to be done with a *real heart*, consisting in those powers and properties of moral agency, which qualify its subject to exercise moral affections; and instead of using them with a right or a wrong heart, they act from a constitutional susceptibility to the good in the object of right affection, or from a desire of happiness.* This Dr. Tyler admits, when he says, that, "there can be no volition without motive," "no act of choice without some object perceived by the mind;" and that regeneration in

* Christian Spectator, 1830, p. 150.

The term regeneration used in a restricted sense.

its restricted sense, is "the first moral act of the new-born soul." For, on these principles, this first act must take place through the mind's perception of some object regarded as good, and consequently under the impulse of a desire for happiness. So, when he says that the sinner is able to do his duty, he admits the same thing; for, the sinner cannot do his duty with wrong motives, nor with no motives at all; nor can he from right motives, except as he uses truth and motives with his constitutional powers, from the impulse of his constitutional desires.

Next Dr. Taylor examines the Strictures in regard to the use and application of terms; and shews that the best theological writers, and the scriptures themselves, authorize the use of the term regeneration to denote the moral change in man produced by the Holy Spirit; and that they sometimes speak of this as a complex act, including both an act of the understanding and of the will, and sometimes employ it to denote the latter in distinction from the former. He also justifies the use which he has made of the terms self-love and selfishness; the former denoting the *constitutional desire* of happiness, common to all moral beings; and the latter, the *moral preference* of other objects to God, as the supreme good. Self-love therefore is not a supreme affection, as he is represented to teach by Dr. Tyler,

who confounds the primary cause or reason of such an affection with the affection itself, and so denies, that it has any cause. Hence, to represent, that if all actions are prompted by self-love or the desire of happiness, there is no distinction between sin and holiness, is to refer moral distinctions to the essential attributes or constitutional propensities of our being, instead of referring them to the choice of the mind. Besides, is it selfish and sinful to desire, and thus to choose, *the very happiness in kind*, by which God would induce us to choose him as our portion? Is there no difference, between choosing *this kind* of happiness from the desire of it, and choosing that lower kind of happiness which the world proffers? And yet in each instance the choice would be prompted by the desire of happiness. To deny, then, that self-love, or the desire of happiness, is the principle from which the first right moral affection or choice springs, is not only to subvert all moral distinctions, but to deny the existence of motives in a change of heart; and is thus to deny the possibility of moral action, and consequently to destroy moral agency. The reviewer then considers the objections brought forward by Dr. Tyler in the Strictures; and shews that they are founded on a false philosophy respecting the nature of moral agency, and an inadequate view of the rapidity and comprehensiveness of the

mental operation in the complex act of turning to God. The mistake in regard to moral agency is, that there is in man no principle of voluntary action, except the selfish principle; consequently, there is no possibility of his acting, except under its influence, till he is physically changed. In regard to the complex act in regeneration, the first error consists in supposing, that the act occupies a considerable period of time; whereas it is *a process* or *series* of acts *only* in the order of nature, and *not* of time; and given only by that mental analysis by which we distinguish the thought of an object from the choice of it. These acts, or rather this complex act, therefore, no more occupies a measurable duration, than the complex act of thought, feeling, and volition, in which one, meeting a lion in his path, should *instantaneously choose* to avoid the danger, and fly to a refuge at hand; or than that in which a sinner, like the Psalmist, should 'think on his ways, and turn to God.' Ps. 119: 59. The second error respects the question, whether it is possible in the nature of things, that man should choose God, or any other object, without first *thinking of* and *desiring* that object as a good; or whether, as Edwards says, 'the will is as the greatest apparent good?' Dr. Tyler denies this distinction; Dr. Taylor affirms it. From these mistakes have originated the queries and charges of contradiction which occupy the concluding part of the Strictures.

Dr. Tyler's 2d pamphlet.

This review, together with a pamphlet signed Evangelicus Pacificus, and written by the Rev. Hubbard Winslow, called forth another pamphlet from the pen of Dr. Tyler, in vindication of his Strictures. As this contains little more than a repetition, in a variety of forms and with some amplification, of the principles and arguments of his former publication, it will not be necessary to enter very minutely into its details. The following account will be sufficient. Dr. Tyler says that he has no dispute with Dr. Taylor, as to what constitutes a free moral agent; nor in regard to the distinction between self-love and selfishness. He maintains, however, that in holy beings self-love is a subordinate principle under the control of universal benevolence; but in moral beings, destitute of benevolence, self-love becomes the controlling principle, and is the same as selfishness. He also says, that if the reviewer, "when he says that self-love is the primary cause of moral action, and that of all specific voluntary action the happiness of the agent in some form is his ultimate end," only means that man "could incline to nothing and will nothing," unless things are either "pleasing or displeasing, agreeable or disagreeable to him," then he has no dispute with him.* Yet he maintains that, if

* p. 20.

Admits that happiness is the ultimate end of action.

personal happiness is the ultimate end of pursuit, the character is selfish; and that the distinction of moral character does not lie merely in the choice of different objects. He then states the turning point of the whole discussion to be, "whether the selfish principle is suspended in the sinner's heart antecedent to regeneration? This he considers as identical with the question, whether the last sinful act is *immediately* followed by the first holy act, without the intervention of a series of acts and states of mind which are neither sinful nor holy. He affirms, that giving a heart of flesh is the same as taking away the heart of stone; that putting on the new man is the same as putting off the old; and that beginning to be holy, is ceasing to be sinful.* In support of this view, he maintains, that the intellectual apprehension which is essential to an act of choice is not a voluntary act, nor distinct from the act of choice itself; but that the perception of the divine character is included in the act of preferring or loving God; and that there can therefore be no series of acts and states of mind which constitute using the means of regeneration. He then discusses at length the question, whether Dr. Taylor's theory does not involve the doctrine of progressive regeneration; and by numerous passa-

* p. 27.

ges from the review, in which the mental acts are described that constitute using the means of regeneration, attempts to show that the statements contemplate a period of measurable duration, rather than an indivisible moment of time. A re-examination of the grounds of the sinner's obligation to do his duty, and of the manner of meeting his objections on account of his dependence, principally occupy the concluding pages of the "Vindication."

A brief notice of the pamphlet was published in the Spectator for June, written, in the absence of Dr. Taylor, by the Editor, Professor Goodrich. He first shows that Dr. Tyler, when he admits, "that man could will nothing, unless things are either pleasing or displeasing to him," virtually concedes, all that Dr. Taylor maintains, when he says, that the happiness of the agent is the ultimate end of all action. He shows that Dr. Tyler, throughout his whole argument, has confounded two great departments of human agency, viz. that of constitutional properties or propensities, and that of choice or voluntary action. These are perfectly distinct, and easily distinguishable; the former being founded in the desire of happiness, and the latter consisting in acts of choice, to which alone, as implying power to the contrary, can pertain the quality of right and wrong. Into this error, in one instance, Dr. Tyler falls, in denying the distinction between 'self-love

He confounds constitutional propensities, and moral action.

and selfishness in unrenewed men. When he asserts that in moral beings destitute of benevolence, self-love becomes the controlling principle, and is then the same as selfishness, he makes a constitutional desire, which is the primary *cause* of moral action, moral action itself; both cause and effect! So again he falls into the same confusion when he denounces, as destroying the distinction between sin and holiness, the statement, that the ultimate end aimed at in every act of choice, is happiness. He thus makes blame attach to constitutional propensities, while it is predicable only of voluntary acts. He also denies, that there is any moral difference between choosing God on account of *the kind of happiness* to be obtained by the choice of this glorious Being; and choosing the world on account *of the kind of happiness* to be obtained from the choice of this inferior object. And yet in each case, as the reviewer shows, happiness would be chosen. The happiness to be found in God, is one object. The happiness in the world, is the other. How wide the difference! What is a holy choice, if not the former? What a sinful choice, if not the latter? So in like manner, when he denies the suspension of the selfish principle, he confounds motive, in the sense of moral intention, with motive in the sense of constitutional impulse; and in consequence, makes the choice of God, (in regenera-

"Motive" used in two senses.

tion,) as the supreme portion of the soul, either to proceed from selfishness, or to take place without a cause.

This brief notice of Dr. Tyler's second pamphlet, ended the discussion in regard to the means of regeneration. It evinced in a short compass, and in a most lucid manner, that the main positions of Dr. Tyler in opposition to Dr. Taylor, in his review of Spring, were founded in error and confusion, respecting the faculties of a moral agent, in the exercise of which his moral actions are performed.

# CHAPTER XV.

## CONTROVERSY WITH DR. WOODS.

### Dr. Woods' statement of Dr. Taylor's theory.

To preserve the regular succession of events in the history of the controversy, it will be necessary in this place to notice a pamphlet from the pen of the Rev. Leonard Woods, D. D., on the subject of the divine permission of sin. The theories accounting for the introduction of sin into the moral universe, were matter of discussion between Dr. Taylor and Mr. Harvey, as has been already noticed in its proper connection. The discussion was resumed in the pamphlet here referred to, which appeared in 1830, in the form of Letters addressed to the Professor of Didactic Theology in Yale College.

In these letters, Dr. Woods lays down the two following propositions, as the opinion of Dr. Taylor: "*first*, that sin is not the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is not, on the whole, preferable to holiness in its stead; and *second*, that in a moral system God could not have prevented all sin, nor the present degree of it."* The latter of these propositions he first con-

* Page 24.

troverts. He considers that the phrases which denote power, or the want of it, are used in three senses: a literal sense, when ability or inability to do a thing that is chosen or willed, is spoken of; a metaphysical or moral sense, when disposition or inclination is spoken of, without regard to power in its primary sense; and a third signification, when there is reference to the nature of things, as rendering an act *possible* or impossible. Thus it is said *literally*, God has power to raise the dead; *metaphysically*, he has not power to do an act of injustice; and *in the third meaning*, he cannot cause a part of a thing to be greater than the whole.

The proposition "that, in a moral system, God could not have prevented all sin, or the present degree of it," he understands to assert a want of power in the literal sense; and thus he ascribes to Dr. Taylor the sentiment, that sin has entered the moral universe, because God had no kind of power, no ability in the literal and absolute sense, to prevent its existence. When Dr. Taylor speaks of *the nature of things*, he supposes him to intend *the nature of man*, as a free agent; and hence to affirm that such is the nature of free moral agency, that God wanted power, literally and absolutely, to exclude sin from the universe, by wholly preventing the perversion of moral agency.*

* Letter II.

God, able to prevent sin.

This sentiment he thinks is supported by no valid proof; and argues against it substantially in the following manner. If the impossibility of God's preventing sin exists solely in the nature of moral agency itself, it relates equally to all moral agents, and takes from God the power of controlling any: but if it exists in the nature of moral agency in connection with the circumstances in which moral agents are placed, God could have ordered these circumstances in a different manner; otherwise he is not almighty in his providence. On both suppositions his power is limited in respect to the conversion of sinners. Facts, moreover, so far as known, go to prove that God *could prevent all sin.* Before the first apostacy in heaven, moral agents were made holy, and kept in obedience; and by the same power they might have been preserved from sin, without any influence derived from the existence and punishment of sin. God preserved some in holiness, while others fell; he has renewed sinners the most obstinate and rebellious; and the consciousness of every one who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, may be cited as evidence that the highest exertion of divine power does not destroy moral agency.* He also examines the more specific statement, which he ascribes to Dr. Taylor,

* Letter III.

that God could not prevent the present degree of sin, and that he could not do better than he has done, for any individual. This he understands to mean, that God could not have prevented any individual sinner from sinning; nor have caused him to sin less than he has sinned. Of this he maintains that there is no proof from fact, nor from the nature or circumstances of sinners; but that there is proof to the contrary, from the divine omnipotence; from the conversion of other sinners; from the fact that we are required to pray for their conversion; and from the representations of scripture, that their conversion depends on the will and pleasure of God.

What has now been presented is, of course, but a general and imperfect view of the manner in which the author of the letters has argued against the supposed theory of Dr. Taylor; but it will exhibit to the reader the main positions of Dr. Woods, and furnish a correct outline of his argument.

He next considers the theory, "that sin is not the necessary means of the greatest good, and that as such, so far as it exists, it is not preferable, on the whole, to holiness in its stead." In as much as this theory is the opposite of the common one, which his opponent has called a groundless assumption, he represents it as adopted by him and held as his belief.

Sin the necessary means of the greatest good.

His first object is to shew that Dr. Taylor has contradicted himself, in his note to the Concio ad Clerum; in the first part denying and in the second affirming, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. The proof of this rests on questions in the note like the following: "As we know of no creature of God whose holiness is secured without the influence which results, either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment; how can it be proved from facts, that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness without this influence? If God could prevent all sin without this influence, why has he not done it? Who is competent to foretell the consequences of the least iota of change, in the present system of influence to produce holiness?" These questions, it is asserted by Dr. Woods, express the opinion, that all the sin which exists, is absolutely necessary to the greatest good. A few remarks are then added to shew, that the fact of sin and its punishment being used as a means of preventing other sin, does not prove that the latter could not be prevented by other means; and though God will undoubtedly secure higher happiness in his moral kingdom by means of moral evil, than could have been secured without it; yet this does not imply that he could not exclude sin entirely from a moral system.

Objections against the theory examined.

Dr. Woods next examines the objections urged against the common position of the "orthodox," as he styles them, "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good." These objections are made on the ground that the theory in question is inconsistent with the benevolence and sincerity of God; with his commands and invitations; and with the duty of sorrowing for sin. In answer to these, he maintains, that, as the divine law respects sin as wrong and hurtful in its own nature and tendency, it must be forbidden and punished; that it is, only when so forbidden and punished, the means of good; that for God to forbid what is in itself evil, though on the whole for the best, implies no insincerity; and that he who commits sin is to sorrow for it, as a thing evil in itself, without regard to the good that may result from it. Nothing in particular is said, in regard to the inconsistency of the theory with the divine benevolence.

The concluding letter is principally devoted to a comparison of the practical influence of the theory ascribed to Dr. Taylor, and that of the "*orthodox*," that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good; and to suggestions, counsel, and queries, for the consideration and benefit of the opposite party in the discussion. In the comparison, the latter theory is represented as possessing great advantage, in respect to the following particulars. It as-

cribes to God unlimited power in respect to the accomplishment of good; while the former implies that God cannot do the good he desires and chooses; and is thus an obvious limitation of his power. It ascribes to God infinite and perfect blessedness; while, on the other, his benevolence fails of being perfectly satisfied. It represents the present system as the best conceivable by the infinite mind; while the other admits that a system without sin, would be better. It gives to God unlimited dominion; while the other limits his control over moral beings. It favors the happiness of the good; while the other leaves them to regret the evils of the moral system of God. It furnishes a ground of entire voluntary submission to the government and providence of God; while the other, in respect to the evils of the system, produces only the submission of necessity. It encourages prayer for all things consistent with infinite wisdom and goodness; while the other leads us to feel, that we are in danger of asking favors which God has not power to bestow. And finally, it leads to humility and entire dependence on divine grace; while the other cherishes a feeling of independence and self-sufficiency. Such are Dr. Woods' representations of the comparative practical effects of the two theories. Next, come the suggestions, and counsel, and queries, with which the letter is concluded. It is suggested that there

is ground for serious disquietude and alarm, in relation to the orthodoxy of the professor to whom the letters are addressed. It is intimated that, on the subject of moral agency, free will, depravity, divine influence, &c., he agrees with Arminians and Pelagians; on several controverted subjects holds the opinions of Unitarians; and in regard to human dependence, the divine power, and the existence of moral evil, adopts the language of Rousseau and the French infidels. The New Haven professor is then counseled not to shew excitement, in regard to the manner in which he is treated by his opponents; to aim at great plainness and perspicuity in his writings; to exhibit perfect fairness and impartiality in stating his agreement with Calvinistic writers; and to avoid protracted discussion, by bringing the whole of his sentiments out in one pamphlet under his own name! Finally, sixteen questions are propounded to him; in regard to his belief respecting the theories in question, the nature of things, of moral agency, of divine influence, and of the doctrine of divine decrees; in regard to his agreement with the Pelagians respecting the natural state of man, free will, and conversion; and with Edwards respecting moral agency; and in regard to various other topics more or less connected with the main points of controversy.

These letters were reviewed in the Christian Spectator, for September, 1830, in an article appended to the review of Bellamy on the divine permission of sin. This part of the article is supposed to have been written by Dr. Taylor. The review, in the first place, shews that Dr. Woods' statement of the question at issue is palpably incorrect. He has changed the fundamental position on which the whole discussion turns, into another and different one, which was never maintained by Dr. Taylor. *His* position was that the two assumptions, *first*, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable, on the whole, to holiness in its stead; and *secondly*, that God could, in a moral system, have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, are *groundless assumptions*. Instead of meeting this position with proof, to shew that they are not groundless assumptions, Dr. Woods makes him to hold, not only that sin is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good, and so far as it exists is *not* preferable to holiness in its stead; but that God could not, in a moral system, have prevented all sin, nor the present degree of sin; which things he had never affirmed; but only maintained that the above assumptions cannot be proved.

The reviewer next shews that Dr. Woods has, in the fullest terms, conceded the great principle

maintained by his opponents; viz. that no man can shew the theory, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, to be true. This Dr. Woods has done by affirming, that man *cannot* know, and that God *only* knows, *the reasons* for the permission of sin. Dr. Taylor replies, then Dr. Woods does not know them. Dr. Woods affirms that all the answer which the case admits, is 'because it seemed good to God not to prevent sin.' Why then does Dr. Woods assign a further reason, viz. that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good? Dr. Woods adopts the very statement of those whom he opposes, when he asks, might not God actually prefer and fix upon the present *method of administration*, which, though it would not entirely exclude evil, would ultimately raise his kingdom to a higher degree of holiness and happiness, than any other? He thus asserts, not that *sin*, but that the present system may be the necessary means of the greatest good—the very position of Dr. Taylor.

The reviewer next points out some inconsistencies in the scheme maintained in the letters of Dr. Woods. One is, that God prefers holiness to sin, *in itself considered*, and at the same time prefers sin to holiness, *all things considered;* it being a contradiction, to suppose any being to choose opposites at the same time. Another is, that sin, in its nature and tendency, is evil; but when prohibited

and punished, possesses a salutary influence. This is the same as saying that a thing, in its nature *wholly* evil, is good as a means of producing good. He then notices the manner in which several things are confounded in the letters. That God has not prevented sin, because it seemed good in his sight not to prevent it, is called a theory instead of a doctrine; and is improperly confounded with the theory, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. Hence the act of God in permitting sin, which is a good act, is confounded with the act of man in sinning, which is evil. The overruling of a thing which is evil for good, is confounded with the thing itself, as a necessary means of good. Thus the sin of the crucifiers of our Savior is represented as the necessary means of the greatest good, when, in fact, the overruling of it was the means of good, and shows, that sin is *not* the means of good. To say, that that which is overruled and counteracted in *all its tendencies* is the necessary means of good, is a contradiction. What may be a necessary means, on the part of God, of preventing more sin, also is confounded with what may in no degree be necessary, on the part of his subjects. The present amount of sin with its punishment, for example, may be necessary, so far as God is concerned, for the prevention of greater evil; but by no means necessary, on the part of moral beings, who are able to do their duty without it.

Evasions of the points in debate noticed.

The reviewer then proceeds to notice some of the evasions of the points in debate, with which the letters abound. An illustration, introduced by Dr. Taylor to shew that God may regard holiness as preferable to sin in its stead, and yet decree the existence of sin as incidental, in respect to divine prevention, to the best system, is treated by Dr. Woods as if designed to shew that God has no more power over the minds of men, than a father has over the minds of his children. When it is asserted by Dr. Taylor that the nature of moral agency is such, that it *may be* true, that God cannot prevent *all* sin under a moral system; the position is met by Dr. Woods, as if it were maintained, that God cannot prevent sin in any instance in which moral agency exists. When it is said that it *may be* true, that free agents, who can sin, will sin, notwithstanding all preventing influences; it is represented as a denial that God can do what he pleases. When the question is, who can prove that the requisite intervention of God for the prevention of any past sin, would not result in a vast increase of sin in the universe; it is met as though it were, who can prove that it would? When it is inquired, whether they who maintain that God could have secured universal holiness, but would not, do not limit the goodness of God; it is answered by the question, how does it limit the good-

ness of God to say that he governs his conduct by the highest reasons, and refrains from doing what he sees to be on the whole best not to do; while the real point is, are these the highest reasons; is it on the whole for the best, that sin should not be prevented, if possible, by holiness in its stead? These, with other evasions, are shown to make a large part of the apparent arguments of the letters, and to be entirely irrelevant to the subject in debate.

The next step of the reviewer is to exhibit the fallacy of the reasoning which these letters contain. The arguments intended to support the position, that God could have prevented all sin in a moral system, are wholly inconclusive. That God is omnipotent is no proof: for there may be an impossibility involving a self-contradiction; and so the thing to be accomplished may not lie within the power of omnipotence: that God has a perfect control over all the circumstances of his creatures, and therefore could have prevented all sin in a moral system, is only a begging of the question; the fact that God has converted sinners in the most unfavorable external circumstances, and those who were the most obstinate and rebellious, does not shew, and even the conversion of the whole human race would not shew, that God could prevent all sin in a moral universe. The point to be proved is, that

The two theories equally limit the power of God.

God could have kept all sin, or the present degree of sin, out of a universal moral system. This, the very thing which Dr. Woods was bound to prove, so far from being proved is virtually denied by Dr. Woods. He says, "that from the moment in which God created a moral world, he has been exerting his influence upon it, in every conceivable manner, and in the highest possible degree;" and what more could God have done? The reviewer then shews, that the reasoning which is designed to prove the unlimited power of God, in respect to the prevention of sin in a moral universe, owes its entire plausibility, to the denial of the moral agency of creatures. It is based on the false position, that, to moral agents belongs no power of resisting moral influences, any more than to inert matter, of resisting omnipotence; and thus denies to them, the essential quality of moral agency; power of choice in all conceivable circumstances. He also shews that the scheme advocated by Dr. Woods, is *a limitation of the power of God*, in substantially the same manner, as that which he opposes. The latter scheme supposes that God may not be able to secure the greatest good in his power to secure, without free agents, some of whom will sin; the scheme of Dr. Woods asserts, that God cannot secure the greatest good, without sin as the necessary means of the result. On both schemes, there is then an

impossibility; on one, the impossibility results from the nature of moral agency; on the other, from the nature of sin.

The reviewer finally comments on the personal and invidious remarks with which the letters abound. They hold up to view two parties, the one dignified with the name "Orthodox," and the other their opponents who are identified to an indefinite extent with Arminians, and Unitarians, and Pelagians, and French infidels. A great number of questions are proposed, which necessarily convey the insinuation, that Dr. Taylor and his friends are radically unsound in the faith, and guilty of dishonesty and deception. At the same time, they are addressed to Dr. Taylor, with the shew of great kindness and affection. These things are complained of as casting odium on brethren who hold the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and against whom no specific charge of a departure from the orthodox belief, has ever been made.

This general view of the Letters of Dr. Woods, and the review of them in the Christian Spectator, is designed to present such a statement of the points at issue, and the arguments employed on each side in their support, as will prevent the necessity of entering largely into the subject hereafter. The substance of what has here been given may be presented in few words. Dr. Taylor intimated in the note

to his Concio ad Clerum, that two very common assumptions respecting the existence of sin are groundless. These assumptions are, *first*, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead; and *secondly*, that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin. By calling these "groundless assumptions," Dr. Taylor intended that they were entirely without proof; and he left it for those by whom they were adopted, to support them, if they were disposed, and if they could. After thus setting aside these theories of the permission of sin, he suggested another as a possible solution of the difficulty. It is this: God may prefer holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place. At the same time, he may prefer the existence of sin, to the non-existence of the best system possible to him. In choosing, therefore, a moral system, he may have purposed the existence of sin as unavoidably incidental to it, so far as his power of prevention is concerned, if he adopted the system. This supposition resolved the difficulty into the nature of a moral system, in which agents are to act freely under a moral government. Dr. Woods entirely misunderstood and misrepresented the positions of Dr. Taylor. He attributed to him the theory that God had no power to control moral

agents, so as to prevent their sinning, even though he chose to do it. The whole of his reasoning on the subject, therefore, fell to the ground. To have accomplished any thing, he must first have shewn, that what Dr. Taylor assumed as a possible solution of the difficulty in question, *could not be true.* He must have shewn, that the reason of the existence of sin, is *not* that God could not keep out all sin from a moral universe; in other words, that God could create and govern through eternity, a moral universe, without permitting sin. This Dr. Woods could not do. He was equally unsuccessful, it is believed, in his attempt to support the theory, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. In the explanations which he made, he abandoned the theory itself, and sometimes advocated the one suggested by Dr. Taylor, that sin, in respect to divine prevention, is incidental to the best system possible to God.

No one, it is believed, who understands the whole controversy on this subject, can fail to see that these Letters of Dr. Woods, so far as it regards the real question in debate, left it where they found it. They established no important point, and overthrew no position maintained by Dr. Taylor.

# CHAPTER XVI.

## SECOND DISCUSSION BETWEEN DR. TAYLOR AND DR. TYLER.

### Dr. Taylor's letter to Dr. Hawes.

It now becomes necessary, in pursuing this history, to notice another branch of the controversy, as it was renewed by Dr. Tyler. In Jan. 1832, the Rev. Dr. Hawes, of Hartford, addressed a letter to Dr. Taylor, requesting a full statement of his views on some of the leading doctrines of the gospel. Dr. Taylor's reply appeared in several newspapers and periodicals; and was also published in a pamphlet form. The following extracts will exhibit the system of doctrine which he holds.

"I readily comply with your request, and submit to your disposal the following statement of my belief on some of the leading doctrines of the gospel. I believe,

"1. That there are three persons in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

"2. That the eternal purposes of God extended to all actual events, sin not excepted; or, that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, and so executes these purposes as to leave the free moral agency of man unimpaired.

"3. That all mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam, are born destitute of holiness, and are by nature totally depraved; in other words, that all men, from the commencement of moral agency do, without the interposition of divine grace, sin, and only sin, in all their moral conduct.

"4. That an atonement for sin has been made for all mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ; that this atonement was necessary to magnify the law, and to vindicate and unfold the justice of God in the pardon of sin; and that the sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is freely justified on the ground of his atoning sacrifice, and on that ground alone.

"5. That the change in regeneration is a *moral* change, consisting in a new holy disposition, or governing purpose of the heart, as a permanent principle of action; in which change the sinner transfers the *supreme* affection of his heart from all inferior objects to the living God, chooses him as the portion of his soul, and his service and glory as his supreme good; and thus in respect to moral character, becomes *a new man.*

"6. That this moral change is never produced in the human heart by *moral suasion*, i. e. by mere influence of truth and motives, as the Pelagians affirm; but is produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit, operating on the mind through the truth,

and in perfect consistency with the nature of moral action, and laws of moral agency.

"7. That all men, (in the words of the article of your church,) *may* accept the offers of salvation freely made to them in the gospel, but that no one *will* do this, except he be drawn by the Father.

"8. That the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, results solely from the voluntary perverseness of the sinner's heart, or disinclination to serve God, which, while it leaves him a complete moral agent, and without excuse for neglecting his duty, suspends his actual salvation on the sovereign will of God.

"9. That the renewing grace of God is *special*, (in distinction from that which is common, and resisted by the sinful mind,) inasmuch as it is that which is designed to secure, and does infallibly secure, the conversion of the sinner.

"10. That all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit, are elected or chosen of God from eternity, that they should be holy; not on account of foreseen faith or good works, but according to the good pleasure of his will.

"11. That all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit, will, through his continued influence, persevere in holiness to the end, and obtain eternal life.

"Such is my faith in respect to some of the leading doctrines of the gospel.

"These doctrines I preach; these I teach in the Theological department of this Seminary; these I have repeatedly published to the world. With what truth or justice any regard me as a 'teacher of Theology introducing heresy into our churches,' the candid can judge."

In respect to comparatively minor points, and philosophical theories, and modes of defending the Calvinistic system of doctrine, about which there has always been a diversity of opinion and freedom of discussion among Calvinists, Dr. Taylor then briefly states, in the following manner, what he does, and what he does not believe.

"I do *not* believe that the posterity of Adam are, in the proper sense of the language, guilty of his sin; or that the ill-desert of that sin is truly theirs; or that they are punished for that sin. But I do believe, that by the wise and holy constitution of God, all mankind in consequence of Adam's sin, become sinners by their own act.

"I do *not* believe that the nature of the human mind, which God creates, is itself sinful; or that God punishes men for the nature which He creates; or that sin pertains to any thing in the mind which precedes all conscious mental exercise or action, and which is neither a matter of consciousness nor of knowledge. But I do believe that sin universally is no other than selfishness, or a *preference* of

one's self to all others—of some inferior good to God; that this free voluntary preference is a permanent principle of action in all the unconverted; and that this is sin, and all that in the scriptures is meant by sin. I also believe, that such is the *nature* of the human mind, that it becomes the occasion of universal sin in men in all the appropriate circumstances of their existence; and that therefore they are truly and properly said to be sinners *by nature.*

"I do *not* believe that sin can be proved to be the necessary means of the greatest good, and that as such, God prefers it on the whole to holiness in its stead; or that a God of sincerity and truth punishes his creatures for doing that which he on the whole prefers they should do, and which as the means of good, is the best thing they can do. But I do believe, that holiness as the means of good, may be better than sin; that it may be true that God, all things considered, prefers holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place, and therefore sincerely desires that all men should come to repentance, though for wise and good reasons he *permits*, or does not prevent the existence of sin. I do *not* believe that it can be proved, that an omnipotent God would be *unable* to secure more good by means of the perfect and universal obedience of his creatures, if they would render it, than by means

of their sin. But I do believe that it may involve a dishonorable limitation of his power to suppose that he could not do it.

"I do *not* believe that the grace of God can be truly said to be *irresistible*, in the primary import of this term. But I do believe, that in all cases, it *may* be resisted by man as a free moral agent, and that when it becomes effectual to conversion, as it infallibly does in the case of all the elect, it is *unresisted*.

"I do *not* believe that the grace of God is necessary, as Arminians and some others maintain, to render man an accountable agent, and responsible for rejecting the offers of eternal life. But I do believe, that man would be such an agent and thus responsible, were no such grace afforded, and that otherwise, 'grace would be no more grace.'

"I do *not* believe that it is necessary that the sinner in using the means of regeneration, should commit sin in order to become holy. But I do believe, that as a moral agent he is qualified so to use the means, i. e. the truth of God when present to his mind, as to become holy at once; that he is authorized to believe, that through the grace of the Holy Spirit, this *may* be done; and that except in so doing, he cannot be truly and properly said to *use* the means of regeneration.

"I do *not* believe that we are authorized to assure the sinner, as Arminians do, and some others also, that the Holy Spirit is always ready to convert him. But I do believe, that we are authorized to assure any sinner, that it *may be true*, that the Holy Spirit is now ready to convert him,—'that God peradventure will now give repentance,' and that thus, in view of the possible intervention of divine influence, we remove what would otherwise be a ground of fatal discouragement to the sinner, when we exhort him to immediate repentance."

The letter closes with an expression of his views respecting the mode of exhibiting the sinner's obligation, in connection with his dependence on the sovereign grace of God, resulting from his voluntary perverseness in sin.

In the Spirit of the Pilgrims for June, 1832, an article under the signature of Dr. Tyler was published, containing remarks on Dr. Taylor's letter to Dr. Hawes. To this Dr. Taylor replied in the number for August. This was answered by Dr. Tyler, who was again replied to by Dr. Taylor. The discussion in this publication, after a year's continuance, was at length concluded with a letter to the editor from Dr. Tyler. This letter, with remarks on two articles in the Christian Spectator on the same subject, afterwards appeared in the form of a pamphlet, with which this part of the controversy

was finally terminated. The details of this voluminous discussion will not here be given. The leading points, maintained in the several articles referred to, will simply be stated; and any who desire to pursue the subject, can easily consult for themselves the original documents.

It is fully admitted by Dr. Tyler, that Dr. Taylor's theological views as embodied in the eleven articles of his creed are correct; but fears are expressed that his theories, carried out into their legitimate consequences, may lead to a renunciation of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Dr. Tyler maintains, that these theories are subversive of some of the most prominent articles of the creed; particularly of the doctrine of decrees, of original sin, of regeneration, and of election.

1st. The doctrine of decrees. "If it be true," says Dr. Tyler, "that God, all things considered, prefers holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place, it cannot be true, that God has purposed or foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. The two statements involve a contradiction. Again, if it be true that sin cannot be proved to be the necessary means of the greatest good, in the sense of being on the whole for the best, it cannot be proved that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Again, it cannot be supposed that God, for wise and good reasons, permits or does not prevent the exist-

ence of sin, and yet all things considered prefers holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place. And again, it involves a contradiction to say, that God could not prevent all sin, or the present degree of sin, in a moral system, and yet that he foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."*

To this it is in substance replied, by Dr. Taylor, that no theory which is either novel or anti-orthodox has been propounded, and that no theory whatever has been advanced as assigning the actual reason of the decree of God respecting the existence of sin. All that has been asserted by him is, that the theory which affirms that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, cannot be proved to be true, and that there are unanswerable objections against it; and that there may be another reason why the existence of sin is purposed, viz. that in respect to the divine prevention, sin may be incidental to the best possible system. There is no contradiction in saying, that God prefers that all his moral subjects, in every instance in which they commit sin, should do their duty and be holy, and yet by giving existence to that system, in which they as moral agents transgress his law, should purpose the existence of sin, in preference to the non-existence of that system which is the best possible to him. Again, there is

* Spirit of the Pilgrims, Vol. V, pp. 327, 328, 509—519.

no inconsistency in maintaining that sin may not be, on the whole, for the best, as the necessary means of the greatest good; and yet maintaining that God foreordained or purposed all events, the existence of sin not excepted. For, holiness may on the whole be for the best, and sin, so far from being the necessary means of the greatest good, be only evil and destructive of good; and its existence be purposed, not for its own sake, but in preference to a greater evil, viz. the non-existence of the present system. Again, all things considered, God may prefer that his moral subjects should in every instance do their duty, and thus prefer holiness to sin in every instance; and yet, for the wise and good reason that the existence of sin is a less evil than the necessary intervention on his part to prevent it, permit its existence. And as to the fourth specification, it has never been affirmed that God cannot prevent sin in a moral system; and that this sentiment should be still imputed, after having been uniformly disclaimed, is just cause of complaint and grief.*

2d. Dr. Tyler maintains, that Dr. Taylor by his theories subverts the doctrine of original sin. According to Dr. Tyler, this doctrine embraces two facts: *first*, that mankind are sinners by nature; and *second*, that this nature is the result of Adam's

* Spirit of the Pilgrims, Vol. V, pp. 425, &c. 669, &c.

sin and in consequence of the connection between him and his posterity. To be sinners by nature, is to possess some hereditary propensity to evil; a native bias or tendency to sin propagated from parent to child. But Dr. Taylor, he says, maintains, that the moral nature of all accountable beings is alike, and the very nature which God has given them; that the posterity of Adam have the same nature as that with which Adam was created, and that which the man Christ Jesus possessed; and that the fact of their sinning is therefore owing, not to the constitutional propensities, or a nature which they possess different from what they would have possessed if born of holy parents, but entirely to the circumstances of temptation in which they commence their moral existence.*

To this it is replied by Dr. Taylor, that if by nature is meant that constitution of being by which the man Christ Jesus and Adam and his posterity are truly and properly human beings, then they possess the same nature IN KIND, though not *in degree*. The constitutional propensities of the descendants of Adam may be much more susceptible to excitement by worldly good, in consequence of his sin and their connection with him, than those of Adam in a state of innocency or of the child

* pp. 329, 330, 545, &c.

Jesus; and their greater strength constituting a difference in *degree*, though not in *kind*, may be the cause of their universally becoming sinners. The proper idea of nature, is that which constitutes a thing what it is in the appropriate circumstances of its existence; and it is this nature of man in the appropriate circumstances of his existence, and not the circumstances themselves, to which the sinfulness of mankind is to be traced.*

In regard to what is called a hereditary propensity to evil, a native bias or tendency to sin propagated from parent to child, it must be supposed to be one of three things: either a constitutional propensity for sin as sin, like the propensity for food or drink; or a sinful choice or preference of the mind; or a constitutional propensity for the natural good to be obtained by sinning. If the first, then we are conscious of no such propensity to sin, nor is there any good in sin as sin, which can be the object of propensity. If the second, then it being a wrong act of the will, it is itself sin; and to assign such a propensity as the cause of *all* sin, involves not only the absurdity of propagated acts of transgression, but also the absurdity of making sin the cause of *all* sin—a sin before the first sin. If the third, then Dr. Taylor admits and asserts it;

* pp. 428, 429, &c.

i. e. he affirms, that all men have a propensity, bias, or tendency to sin, which results from their constitutional propensities to natural good, in all the appropriate circumstances of their being. The question is not, whether mankind are born with *a propensity to sin;* but what is this propensity?—is it a propensity for sin *as sin;* or is it a *sinful* propensity; or is it a propensity for natural good, which leads to, and universally results in, sin, as soon as men become moral beings? While Dr. Taylor has understood, and correctly understood, Dr. Tyler and others to maintain a propagated propensity to sin in the two first senses, he has maintained a propagated propensity to sin in the last sense, from the beginning of the discussion.

3d. Dr. Tyler claims that, though Dr. Taylor's creed in respect to the doctrine of regeneration is unobjectionable, yet he has adopted theories which tend to sap the foundation of the doctrine.

In proof of this, he represents Dr. Taylor as holding that sinners have power to resist any measure of divine influence, and consequently to make it impossible for God to convert them; that they choose or prefer different objects, as their chief good, according as they estimate their relative value in view of the happiness to be derived from them, and consequently, that nothing more is necessary to effect their conversion, than to convince them that

they have mistaken the true way of securing their highest happiness; and that they cease to resist divine grace antecedent to regeneration, and consequently, need no special influences of the Holy Spirit for their conversion.

To this Dr. Taylor replies, that, though sinners as moral agents have natural power to resist divine influences, and therefore that the grace of God in their conversion is not irresistible in the primary import of the term, yet this does not deny to God complete power over the minds of sinners, so that his grace may become efficacious, in producing their voluntary submission. Nor, when it is said that the sinner prefers the world to God as his chief good, according to his estimate of the higher present happiness to be derived from it, is any thing more intended, than that the will is as the greatest apparent good. To represent this preference as a mere mistake of the judgment, so that nothing more is necessary to effect the conversion of a sinner than to convince him that he has mistaken the true way of securing his highest happiness, is to overlook the whole character of the previous discussion on this subject, and to confound the state or affection of the mind in viewing a thing as now most agreeable, with a dictate of reason, or sober judgment, or decision of the understanding.

In respect to the last specification, Dr. Taylor replies, that he has never maintained that the sinner ceases to resist divine grace before regeneration in the popular import of the term, but merely, in the restricted sense of the word, as denoting the act of loving God, in distinction from the mental acts that precede it; and then, only in the order of nature and not of time, he ceases to love the world supremely before his affections are given to God; or in other words, before he chooses God as his portion. So far is this representation from denying the necessity of divine influences in regeneration, that the selfish principle is never suspended antecedent to the choice of God, except through the influences of the Holy Spirit.

4th. Dr. Tyler says, that in his creed, Dr. Taylor has made a full and satisfactory statement of the doctrine of election, but that this statement is utterly inconsistent with the principles which he has adopted.

It is inconsistent with his views in respect to God's preference, all things considered, of holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place. For if God prefers, all things considered, holiness to sin in every instance, he will of course do all in his power to make every individual holy. Instead then of electing any to life, he saves all that he can; so that there is no election. And ac-

cording to the theory, that the grace of God may in all cases be resisted by man as a free moral agent, there can be no purpose to bring to repentance certain individuals, for those individuals may resist his grace and thus render their conversion impossible in the nature of things.

To this it is replied by Dr. Taylor, that the position in respect to God's preference of holiness to sin above stated, is a substitute for the one which he maintains, viz. that God prefers, all things considered, that all men should become holy rather than continue in sin *under the present system*. This does not imply that he does all he can for the conversion of every sinner, but what is best *under the present system*; so that he may prefer that only a part should be holy, rather *than change the system*. And the determining who this part shall be, is his purpose of election. He says further, that in regard to the inconsistency of the doctrine of election, with the natural possibility of a free moral agent's resisting the grace of God; if there is any, it lies in the fact that God cannot foreknow the actions of such an agent. It is therefore an inconsistency between moral agency and the divine foreknowledge.

This general exhibition of the main points of discussion, in that part of the controversy now considered, will enable the reader to understand the

real points of difference, and the principal arguments by which the different views are supported. Before this branch of the subject is dismissed, it will be proper briefly to refer to the two articles before mentioned, in the Christian Spectator, written by Dr. Taylor, and to Dr. Tyler's letter to the Editor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, with his remarks on those articles.

The first article in the Spectator contains a full examination of Dr. Tyler's theories respecting human depravity, and the divine permission of sin. The former theory is thus represented. The nature of man since the apostacy differs as really from his nature before that event, as the nature of a lion which leads him to feed on flesh, differs from that of the ox which leads him to feed on grass. Dr. Taylor shews that this theory is encumbered with many difficulties. Amongst other things, it exhibits God as the responsible author of sin; accounts for all sin in men by asserting a previous sin as its cause; is inconsistent with the doctrine of natural ability, and of course with the moral agency of man; makes regeneration a physical change, and the exhibition of motives entirely useless; supports the Arminian doctrines of a self-determining power of the will, and of the necessity of grace to restore moral agency to man.

Dr. Tyler's theory respecting the permission of sin considered.

The theory respecting the divine permission of sin is next considered. This theory, which is "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," Dr. Taylor maintains, involves absurdities and contradictions; is inconsistent with the scriptures; represents the worst kind of moral action as the best; and if carried out into its legitimate consequences, leads to *universalism*, to *infidelity*, and to *atheism*.

In his letter to the Editor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, Dr. Tyler denies that he has maintained, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good in any such sense as is imputed to him. The position which he maintains is, "that God will so overrule all the sin which exists, and so counteract its tendencies, as to bring to pass a greater amount of good than would have been realized, if sin had never existed." He believes, "that the wrath of man shall praise God, and that the remainder of wrath he will restrain;" that is, that God will overrule all the sin that ever has existed or that ever will exist, in such a manner as to get glory to himself; and that all the sin which he sees could not be thus be overruled he will restrain or prevent. He says also, that they who are represented as holding that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, maintain that the possible alternative presented to the divine mind, being the existence of

sin on the one hand, and on the other the non-existence of the best system, God chose the present system, because, notwithstanding the evil which it contains, it is the best system.

He also claims, that his views on the subject of depravity are entirely misrepresented. When he maintained that the nature of man since the fall differs as really from his nature before that event, as the nature of the lion differs from that of the ox, he did not maintain that it differed in the *same sense*, nor has he undertaken to tell in what the native, hereditary propensity to evil, which he attributes to mankind, consists. Nor ought such a construction to be put upon his language, as to attribute to him the position that man cannot sin, without a constitutional propensity to sin. He has no where denied that the posterity of Adam might sin, without a constitutional propensity to sin.

# CHAPTER XVII.

## DISCUSSION BETWEEN DR. TAYLOR AND DR. TYLER CONTINUED.

### Dr. Taylor's letter to the Editor of the Spectator.

After the publication of the last mentioned letter, Dr. Taylor addressed a letter to the Editor of the Christian Spectator, the object of which was "to shew, that, on the basis of Dr. Tyler's last statements and explanations, all controversy between them might be terminated in an entire agreement on the chief points at issue." The design of the communication was conciliatory. Instead of inquiring what Dr. Tyler *had* maintained, with a view to expose his inconsistency and shew a departure from his original ground, as might have been done, Dr. Taylor waved this mode of reply, and presented the evidence of an agreement between them which he believed now actually existed. He accordingly considers Dr. Tyler as having removed, in his last communication, every obstacle to an entire agreement of opinion between them, *first*, in regard to his theory respecting the divine permission of sin; and *secondly*, in regard to human depravity.

Respecting the permission of sin, Dr. Tyler is understood now to disclaim the sentiment, that sin is

in any sense good in its tendencies, or is in itself a means of good. He is understood to reject the position that God, all things considered, prefers sin to holiness in all instances in which the former takes place. He says that sin is an evil, and tends to evil and to evil only. He maintains that sin under the government of God, is the means of good simply as an *antecedent*, the good itself being *exclusively* dependent on divine agency. It is only the occasion of good when overruled by God. He admits that God prefers, all things considered, that all men should become holy rather than continue in sin *under the present system*. He rejects the inferences which have been drawn from the statement that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good; such as, that those who die in their sins, were created for the purpose of displaying the divine attributes, and by their sins and sufferings, of becoming the means of the highest happiness of others; and that God could not be satisfied with the perfect holiness and perfect happiness of his moral creatures; but introduced sin into his system, for the sake of raising some to a higher conceivable perfection of happiness by the eternal agonies of the damned. He also positively affirms, that the hypothesis which had been exhibited as the peculiarity of Dr. Taylor's scheme, viz. the *possible* alternative presented to the divine mind may have been, the

existence of sin on the one hand, and on the other, the non-existence of the best system, is the very *doctrine* which he maintains.* These considerations, in the opinion of Dr. Taylor, shewed conclusively that he and Dr. Tyler then agreed, in all that is essential respecting the divine permission of sin.

Dr. Taylor also regarded all ground of further debate on the subject of human depravity, as removed by Dr. Tyler. Dr. Tyler is now understood to deny, that there is in the human mind a *constitutional* propensity to sin. He explicitly disclaims the opinion, that there is in man a propensity to sin, which leads him to disobey God by the same physical law, as that by which the lion is led to feed on flesh; and says, he has not undertaken to tell in what the propensity to sin consists, nor does he pretend to be able to tell. He has by no means affirmed, that the change which human nature has undergone in consequence of the apostacy, is a change *in the physical structure of the mind.* Dr. Tyler also disclaims the opinion, that the propensity to sin in the human mind, is itself sinful. He represents the imputation of this sentiment to him as groundless, and as neither just nor candid. He is understood to agree, however, with Dr. Taylor, that there is what may truly and properly be called

* Christian Spectator, 1833, pp. 449—459.

a bias, or propensity, to sin in all men. But they concur in believing with Edwards, that the ground or reason of the universal sinfulness of mankind, instead of being a disposition to sin which is voluntary and sinful, or a constitutional propensity of the mind, is simply a tendency, liableness, or proclivity to sin, resulting from constitutional propensities which were in man in innocence.

Dr. Tyler, is also understood to admit, that mankind come into the world with *the same nature* IN KIND, as that with which Adam was created; to maintain that mankind not only *may be*, but *are* sinners *by nature*, without a constitutional propensity to sin; and that the only reason that the posterity of Adam do not exhibit the same moral character which Adam exhibited, is not that they have a different nature in kind, but that they have stronger propensities to natural good, and are placed in different circumstances. Thus Dr. Taylor considered Dr. Tyler as now agreeing with him, in the views which he had always maintained of the doctrine of depravity by nature.*

Hence it seemed to him, not only unnecessary, but impossible, to protract the debate.

The subject, however, was viewed differently by Dr. Tyler. He published his letter to the Edi-

* pp. 459—467.

tor of the Spirit of the Pilgrims, and subjoined remarks denying the supposed agreement between himself and Dr. Taylor. To shew that their views do not harmonize, he made the following nine specifications, in which he claims that his opponent differs in sentiment from himself.

Dr. Taylor maintains, he says, contrary to his belief: 1. That God could not have prevented all sin in a moral system; 2. That the existence of sin is not on the whole for the best, and that a greater amount of good would have been secured, had all God's creatures remained holy, than will result from the present system; 3. That God, all things considered, prefers holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place; 4. That mankind come into the world with the same nature in kind as that with which Adam was created; 5. That the only reason that the posterity of Adam do not exhibit the same moral character which Adam exhibited, is not that they have a different nature, but that they are placed in different circumstances; 6. That selfishness does not consist in making our own happiness our ultimate end, but in love of the world, or in preferring the world to God as our portion or chief good; 7. That self-love is the primary cause of all moral action; 8. That sinners may so resist the grace of God, as to render it impossible for God to convert them; and, 9. That

antecedent to regeneration the selfish principle is suspended in the sinner's heart; that he ceases to sin; and uses the means of regeneration with motives which are neither right nor wrong.* Here, then, are exhibited in Dr. Tyler's own language, the sentiments of his opponent, on the points on which he regards him as differing from himself. Lest these statements should pass from the mind of the reader, or should not be duly compared with the previous history of the discussion, a few remarks will be bestowed upon them before proceeding farther.

1. Not one of the alledged points of difference, even admitting that they are correctly stated, relates to a single important doctrine of the gospel. They have reference to abstract theories and speculations, which, whether true or false, do not touch the facts embraced in the fundamental articles of the Calvinistic faith.

2. Of the nine specifications, the first and fifth are entire misstatements of Dr. Taylor's views. So far from maintaining that God could not have prevented all sin in a moral system, he has merely asserted that it *may be* true, that sin is a necessary incident, so far as God's prevention is concerned, to the best moral system; and instead of attributing

* Pamphlet, pp. 36—39.

the present sinful character of man to his circumstances, and not to his nature, he expressly ascribes it to his nature, which is such, in consequence of his connection with Adam, that he sins, and only sins, in all the appropriate circumstances of his being.

The second and third specifications are liable to be misunderstood. When it is maintained by Dr. Taylor, that sin is not, on the whole, for the best; that greater good than the present would be secured by the holiness of all God's creatures; and that, all things considered, God prefers in every instance holiness to sin; a part of "the whole," and of "all things to be considered," is the voluntary obedience of all sinners to the divine law, under the present system, which is preferable to sin and misery in its stead.

The fourth specification is also liable to be misunderstood. By the same nature, IN KIND, some may suppose that the same, *in all respects*, is intended; whereas all that is meant, is that the posterity of Adam have a soul possessed of the same powers and susceptibilities as that with which he was created; so that, like him, they are human beings and moral agents. At the same time, their *propensities* to inferior good may be stronger than his in a state of innocency, and be the occasion of sin in all our race.

The power of God to convert sinners not denied.

The sixth and seventh specifications are ambiguous, and owing to their ambiguity, Dr. Tyler has been led not only into much useless discussion, but into several inconsistencies. The ambiguity lies in the terms ultimate end and self-love. The former is sometimes used to denote the external motive or object of choice, in which sense Dr. Tyler uses it; while Dr. Taylor means by it, the constitutional desire of happiness, called also self-love, which is the internal motive or cause of all action. In one sense, the ultimate end of the miser is wealth; in the other, the pleasure or happiness to be gained by its possession and pursuit. The term self-love, in some minds, is the same as selfishness; and it is difficult for them to detach from it a bad signification, and use it as synonymous with a simple desire for happiness. There is also another difficulty in the case; that of bringing some to think what fits man to act at all, viz. the feeling of pleasure, or the happiness proposed to the mind by action; which distinguishes them, in respect to their capacity for action, from inanimate things. If Dr. Tyler had these things in mind, he would be agreed, it is presumed, with Dr. Taylor, in respect to these specifications. Indeed, he has admitted all that has ever been maintained on this subject by Dr. Taylor.

The eighth specification contains a mis-statement. It has never been maintained, that it is impossible

for God to convert any sinner or all the sinners belonging to the human race; but only that sinners have natural power of resisting divine grace, when they yield to it and it becomes effectual to their conversion; in other words, that a moral being, in choosing God, has, at the same time, power of contrary choice. If he has not this power, then in his conversion he ceases to be a moral agent.

The last specification contains one mis-statement, and the whole is calculated to mislead those not familiar with the controversy. All that is maintained by Dr. Taylor is, that the active love of the world ceases to predominate in the sinner's mind, the indivisible moment of time that, under the promptings of a constitutional desire of happiness, he thinks of God as an object of preference, before, in the order of nature, he places his supreme affections on him. This indivisible moment, the sinner does not cease to sin; for he does not love God supremely, until the final choice or preference of him is made.

Thus, the nine points of difference, when examined, are found to exist principally in Dr. Tyler's misapprehension of Dr. Taylor's sentiments; owing in part to the ambiguity of language, and partly to his own confused ideas respecting the two distinct departments of moral agency, the will and the involuntary constitutional propensities.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## DISCUSSION ON THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PURPOSES.

Review of Fisk.—Point at issue stated.

The history of the discussion between Dr. Taylor and Dr. Tyler being now brought to a close, it remains to notice some other writings on the same general controversy. In doing this, a scrupulous regard will not be had to the order of time in which these writings appeared; but they will be taken up in such order as will best preserve the unity of the particular topics, and the connection of the whole subject. The discussion on the doctrine of the divine purposes will first be noticed.

In the number of the Christian Spectator, for Dec. 1831, was published a review written by Professor Fitch, of Yale College, of a sermon by Dr. Fisk, President of the Wesleyan University, on Predestination and Election. The point at issue, as stated in the sermon, the reviewer understands to be, "whether God does, or does not *produce*, by his efficient energy, those volitions of moral beings for which he holds them accountable?" This, however, is not the question between Calvinists

and Arminians. It is, whether or not God determined that the events which take place, should take place, in the very manner in which they do, and for the very ends. This is a question of fact, and does not depend on the mode in which the determined events are accomplished. Calvinists generally believe, that it is in such a manner that "thereby God is neither the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. The only points against which the reasoning in the sermon has any force, are these two: first, that God produces, by his direct omnipotence, the volitions of his accountable creatures; and secondly, that he prefers the existence of sin (where it occurs) to holiness: neither of which positions is maintained by the great body of Calvinists.* The reviewer then shews that God may, in his eternal purpose concerning his own works, predetermine the particular train of events which shall occur in his kingdom, without producing the volitions of his moral subjects by any direct and immediate acts of his creative omnipotence. Man being created and upheld by God as an intelligent and voluntary agent, is the efficient cause of his own volitions; and his moral actions may be pre-deter-

* Christian Spectator, 1831, pp. 598—605.

mined in the purpose or choice of God to create and govern the moral universe to which he belongs, by that system of means and influences, under which he, as a moral agent, has his existence.

It may be true also, that God prefers in every instance in which sin occurs, holiness in its stead, and yet has determined the existence of sin. He may have purposed its existence, because he preferred it, in connection with the system which he has chosen, to the non-existence of a moral kingdom. Thus, in purposing to create, uphold, and govern a moral kingdom, he may have purposed the sinful actions of a portion of his subjects, without laying them under any compulsion to sin, or doing any thing directly and efficiently, with the design of securing their wrong moral action; and he may, in every instance in which they sin, prefer their obedience.

The particular doctrine of election is a purpose of God that respects mankind, as sinners: a purpose to save a part of those, who he foreknew would sin; not on account of any foreseen faith or good works on their part, but on account of the good to be secured by the divine interposition in their behalf. Each individual chosen is ordained to everlasting life; and in fulfilling his electing purpose towards him, God, having in due time provided a way of salvation, secures his compliance with the

Includes the purpose to produce holiness in the elect.

terms, by the various means which he employs; particularly the sanctification of the Spirit; and keeps him by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Thus, the purpose of election includes, the purpose to produce holiness in the elect, and to secure his perseverance in it to the end. In the accomplishment of this purpose, the elect himself, as a moral being, voluntarily yields himself to Christ through the belief of the truth, and works out his salvation with fear and trembling, while God, at the same time, though without compulsion, works in him both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

Such is the general scheme of the reviewer of Fisk on Predestination and Election. The article of course met the disapprobation of the Hopkinsians and others, who hold that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good and preferable to holiness in its stead; of the supralapsarians, who maintain that God by an eternal decree determines the destinies of men for his own glory, and without regard to their voluntary agency; of those who hold the "taste scheme;" and of all others who consider God, as controlling the actions of his moral subjects by the mere exercise of creative omnipotence, without regard to means adapted to their moral agency. In 1833, two works appeared, designed to oppose the views advocated by the New

Haven divines; and particularly to support the doctrine of divine efficiency. One of these was from the pen of Chauncey Lee, D. D., of Connecticut; the other was by Dr. Griffin, then President of Williams College. The former writer considered himself called upon, by the efforts at present made to disseminate "the pernicious doctrines of Arminius," to undertake the defense of the truth. He advocates the supralapsarian views of Predestination and Election; asserting "that God had no motive out of himself" for electing some to everlasting life. In regard to divine efficiency, he maintains that God produces the volitions of men, and converts sinners by an act of physical omnipotence and irresistible power; so that in regeneration, "the creature is no more active than in his original creation."

The work of Dr. Griffin professes to be a defense of the doctrine of divine efficiency, against certain modern speculations. He first examines "the theory exhibited" in the review of Fisk, which he says "is one half of the way pure Arminianism; and the other half it assumes the high language of Calvinism, with an Arminian meaning two thirds of the way, and for the other third a Calvinistic meaning wholly at variance with the rest of the system."

He next examines "the theory of Dr. Taylor" as exhibited in the review of Spring, on the means

of regeneration. He regards him as every where denying divine efficiency and limiting the agency of the Spirit to the mere presentation of motives; and of course he considers that his views of predestination and election agree with those of Dr. Fitch, and are essentially Arminian.

In order to exhibit the difference of views between Dr. Griffin and the New Haven divines, it will be necessary first to point out some errors in his statement of their doctrines, and then to present, side by side, the sentiments of both on the controverted topics.

1. Dr. Griffin misrepresents (not intentionally it is presumed) the New Haven divines, in asserting that they deny the controlling power of God over the minds of all his moral subjects in this world. His error on this subject results, no doubt, from a failure to perceive how such control can be maintained, without the direct application of physical power, which destroys the capacity of resistance in the being upon whom it is exerted. He seems to imagine that the application of divine influence, in such a manner as to leave the power of contrary choice in the moral agent, though the result is the certain voluntary action of that agent in obedience to the influence employed, can never secure infallibly the accomplishment of the divine purposes. Hence, he understands those whom he opposes, to

deny, that God is able absolutely to control his creatures in this world.

2. Dr. Griffin misrepresents the New Haven divines, in imputing to them the sentiment "that all God can do is to throw truth upon the understanding and conscience of men by his illuminating Spirit;" and that the Spirit thus operates on the truth in making it effectual to their conversion. *They* affirm that God operates on the minds of men, and that men act in view of truth and motives in yielding to divine influence. The error that Dr. Griffin falls into in regard to their belief on this point, is to be traced to his own views of efficiency. His philosophy is that of Dr. Burton. He believes "in a temper or nature anterior to exercise." "No motives, great or small, will prevail, unless adapted to the existing temper." Hence, antecedent to any influence of truth or to any moral action in view of motives, the hearts of men must be changed by a direct physical efficiency. Yet, when it is said "that God efficiently causes the mind to see the truth in such a light that it infallibly falls in with it," he does not object to the statement. He says, "if the divine power is applied directly to the mind to make truth seen, attended to and felt, it is all we ask."* If he had admitted also that when truth is

* Divine Efficiency, p. 99.

Dr. Griffin misstates the New Haven divines.

thus seen, attended to, and felt, the sinner in regeneration chooses God in view of it, he would have admitted all that is contended for on this subject by the New Haven divines.

3. Dr. Griffin misrepresents the New Haven divines in ascribing to them the belief "that God does the best he can by his Spirit for every individual, and therefore, as much for one as another." *They*, on the contrary, believe that God can do much more than he does for any individual and for every individual of our race, when they are considered as individuals, and without relation to all the subjects of the divine kingdom and for eternity; in other words, they only believe with Dr. Griffin himself, "that God does the best he can for each, consistently with the highest good of the universe." And in regard to their believing that he does as much for one as another, this is only an inference from a mis-statement of their views, for which there is no authority in any of their writings, and which is no part of their doctrines.

4. Dr. Griffin misrepresents the New Haven divines in regard to their views of a self-determining power. He seems to suppose that they hold the Arminian doctrine of the freedom of the will, that the soul in willing, determines itself absolutely and independently by its own act. In opposition to this doctrine, it is maintained by Edwards, that the will

is as the greatest apparent good; in other words that the mind's estimate of the greatest good determines the choice, the power of contrary choice notwithstanding. This is also the doctrine of the New Haven divines. When the question is, what determines the will in every specific volition? their answer is, the greatest apparent good as perceived and estimated by the mind, previously but proximately to the act of choice. In this they agree with Edwards, in opposition to the Arminian doctrine which he controverts in his treatise on the will. But if the question is, why does the will act at all? here again, they agree with Edwards, that it is because the soul has the power or faculty of choosing in view of the motives which determine it to choose in a particular manner. Other particulars might be mentioned in which Dr. Griffin misrepresents the views of the New Haven divines; but the instances referred to are sufficient for the present purpose.

Some of the views which he maintains, will now be compared with those which he opposes, by bringing them into juxtaposition.

1. The doctrine of divine efficiency. This he defines to be "the effectual power of God immediately applied to the heart to make it holy."* This

* p. 6.

power he considers not only exerted on men in in their regeneration and sanctification, but on holy beings like the angels. All holy volitions are produced by the immediate power of God. This efficiency is exerted by a direct action on the mind independently of motive, and without the power of resistance or contrary choice. Such is understood to be the divine efficiency, advocated by Dr. Griffin.

The New Haven divines might adopt his definition, but with a different meaning. Divine influence they consider "effectual" and "applied immediately to the mind," causing in the subject of it right moral action; but not in such a manner as to preclude motives, or as to destroy the power of contrary volition. Hence, they oppose that view of divine efficiency which moves moral beings like matter, as inconsistent with the laws of moral agency.

2. Dr. Griffin and the New Haven divines differ in regard to moral agency.

In his view, a moral agent is one who has the faculties of a rational soul, but who is not necessarily independent in the exercise of those faculties. The volitions of moral beings are the immediate result of divine efficiency, so that it is not their moral depravity that makes the Spirit's operations necessary in respect to men; but the want of power in themselves as agents, to exercise holy affections

independent of the action of God upon them. The New Haven divines regard man as a complete agent in himself, and the author or efficient cause of his own moral acts. He is a cause of action out of God, created and upheld by him, but free in his volitions, though always acting in view of motives, and under the influences which God is pleased to exert upon him. They regard not merely, *the exercise of the will* in voluntary acts, but *the power of choosing and refusing*, under all circumstances, essential to moral agency. Such agents, however, are under the complete control of God according to his eternal purpose; but the manner in which he controls them must be in accordance with the laws of their being. Man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.

3. Dr. Griffin and the New Haven divines differ in regard to the divine permission of sin.

Dr. Griffin maintains that God can prevent sin in all the moral agents whom he has created, in all circumstances and in all duration; and that he has purposed its existence for his own glory. For this end the highest exhibition of himself, involving the display of all truth, the punishment of sin, and the work of redemption, is necessary. He considers sin, therefore, a necessary means of the highest display of the divine perfections, and as answering great and important purposes under the government

of God. He, however, admits that the greatest display of the glory of God is necessary to the highest general holiness, and that he does for each of his creatures, the best that he can, consistently with his glory; but denies that the difficulty of doing more, for securing the holiness of all, lies in the nature of a moral system.

The New Haven divines maintain, that God acts for the highest happiness of the universe, and chose the present system as the best possible to him for this end; that holiness is preferable, for this end, to sin, in all instances; and that the reason of the divine permission of sin, *may be*, that such is the nature of moral agency, that, in a universe of moral beings, the entire prevention of wrong moral action through eternity, may be inconsistent, so far as God is concerned, with the best system possible to him. Dr. Griffin and the New Haven divines agree, therefore, that God has chosen the present system, because it will result in the highest holiness and happiness possible to him to secure; and they agree, that in doing this, he acts for his own highest glory. They agree also, that the display of his perfection is necessary to the accomplishment of the highest good in the universe, and that the admission of sin into his moral kingdom, was in some sense necessary to him. When the question is, why is its admission necessary? Dr. Griffin answers; As a means

own agency in creation, and in the administration of his government, in the best manner possible for securing the highest good of the whole; and that thus he foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Hence, he determined all his own acts in regard to every moral being, choosing from the whole those whom he would retain in holiness, and electing from mankind such as he would bring to repentance; for wise reasons, permitting others to go on in sin, under such influences as he determined to exert upon them. Thus, their difference of views consists, not in the facts which constitute the doctrine of predestination and election, but in respect to the reasons of the divine purposes, and the mode of accomplishing them.

From this examination of Dr. Griffin's work on divine efficiency, it is apparent, that his sentiments do not altogether accord with those which have been held by the standard New England writers, and that he has, on most of the essential points in controversy, greatly misunderstood and misrepresented the opinions which he designed to oppose. The foundation of his mistakes lay in his philosophy of moral agency, which led him virtually to deny to man the power of originating his own volitions. From his high worth and great influence in the churches, his work was calculated to excite, in some quarters, no small distrust of the theology

which he was understood to oppose. It had its influence in the Presbyterian church, and was, in some degree, no doubt, concerned in producing the mistakes and misapprehension, which have resulted in its present unhappy divisions.

# CHAPTER XIX.

## DR. SPRING AND DR. WOODS ON NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

Dr. Spring on native depravity.

It has already been shewn, that Mr. Harvey, in his second pamphlet, entirely changed the original ground of controversy, which related to the nature of sin, into the question whether mankind are sinners from the instant of their birth? It was then intimated that the discussion of this question, which afterwards assumed a prominent place in the controversy, would again be referred to, and more fully exhibited. Some important events, of a previous date, being for the present passed by, for the sake of concluding in this place, the account of the doctrinal discussion, two or three articles will now be noticed, which have maintained the sentiment, that mankind sin at and in the moment of their birth.

In 1833, Dr. Gardiner Spring published a dissertation on native depravity, the object of which was to combat the error of the New Haven School. The first assault upon the doctrine of native depravity, he says, was from them, and in their own covered way to the field. He represents them as at first delicately and modestly hinting, in conver-

sation, at the error in question, and suggesting doubts as to what the Bible taught in relation to the native character of our fallen race. "But this period of hesitation and scepticism," he says, "has gone by. The scriptural doctrine of native depravity is now boldly denied. For a considerable time past it has been unhesitatingly maintained, that all mankind are born destitute of moral character, and are neither holy nor sinful; that, though they are destitute of original righteousness, they are free from sin, and have no moral corruption of nature, or propensity to evil; that they are perfectly innocent; that they have no more moral character than animals; and that they come into existence in the same state in which Adam was before his fall, and in which the holy child Jesus was, when he was born in the manger."* For proof of these statements he refers to the Christian Spectator, and Stuart on the Romans. In opposition to these views, his object in the dissertation is to shew, *that infants are sinners.* Sin, he says, is a positive existence and a moral evil, consisting in the transgression of law by intelligent beings. He defines the disposition, moral feelings, or inclinations of the soul, which constitute sin, to be a supremely selfish spirit. "There is no other sin in the empire of Je-

* Page 4.

hovah but this. When we say that men are sinners, we mean to say that they are doers and perpetrators of this foul deed."* The question whether infants are capable of moral character, is synonymous with the question, whether they have a rational and immortal soul? Such a soul they possess from their birth; and it consists in *natural faculties* and *moral* dispositions. The former are independent of the will, and belong to the intellectual character. The latter are the internal operations or emotions of the mind, which can be compared with a rule of action. These are both essential to the soul's existence, and belong to the infant of a day old, as really as to a man of eighty. The law which the infant transgresses as soon as he is born, is conscience, which is one of the natural faculties of the soul. Accordingly, as soon as he is born, the infant puts forth moral emotions or exercises of the will, which he judges to be wrong, and knows to be violations of conscience; or rather, according to Dr. Spring's philosophy, as the moral dispositions are properties essential to the soul's existence, the soul is created in a state of transgression to the law of conscience. The doctrine of native depravity, thus explained, he defends by a reference to various texts of scripture, and by argu-

* Page 9.

ments deduced from the rite of circumcision and baptism, as applied to infants; from the necessity that their salvation should be through the atonement of Christ, and that they should be subjects of regeneration; and from the fact that they suffer and die.

In regard to Dr. Spring's statement of the sentiments of the New Haven School, it is proper to remark, that the language which has been quoted from him on the subject, gives a very unfair representation of their opinions. On the minds of many, it will unavoidably have the impression, that they hold that infants are in all respects such as they would have been, if mankind were not sinners; and that there is no ground of certainty laid in the constitution with which they are born, that they will sin as soon as they are capable of moral action.

In respect to the reasoning on which Dr. Spring relies for the support of his doctrine of native depravity, it is not necessary here to enter into an examination of it. It is substantially the same, as that which Mr. Harvey and others have often used on this subject, and which has been examined and replied to by those who think themselves unable to prove from reason or scripture, that infants, *the instant of their birth*, are voluntary transgressors of known law.

Review of Spring on native depravity.

This dissertation on native depravity was reviewed in the Christian Spectator for June, 1833, by Dr. Taylor. The reviewer shews that Dr. Spring differs from the old Calvinists, from the advocates of physical depravity, and the standards of the Presbyterian church, in making all sin consist in voluntary action, and rejecting the doctrine of original sin; that he differs from New England divines, who make all sin consist in mental exercise or action, in his affirming that moral agency commences at birth; but differs least of all from his New Haven brethren, who neither affirm nor deny the precise time when moral agency commences; while they agree with him in regard to the nature of sin. Thus he stands alone, none agreeing with him in maintaining that voluntary transgression commences at the instant of birth; yet he denounces those from whom he differs least, as Pelagians, and sets up his own individual opinion as the standard of orthodoxy.*

* Since the review was written, it is believed that Dr. Spring's views on this subject, have been to some extent adopted by a certain class of writers in New England. The Evangelical Magazine, the organ of the party in Connecticut opposed to the New Haven divines, has sometimes seemed to advocate these views; though at other times it has appeared to favor the doctrine of an innate sinful depravity back of all moral action. Dr. Woods *appears* to adopt the views of Dr. Spring, though he is by no means so explicit in his statements.

Dr. Woods' prize essay.—Difficulty of interpreting his language.

In 1835, Dr. Woods published his prize essay on native depravity.* As this work owes its existence no doubt to the New Haven controversy, and has reference to one of the principal subjects of that controversy, it would be improper to pass over it here in silence. The examination of it however must be brief. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact meaning, on nice metaphysical points, of a writer like Dr. Woods. Instead of laying down his main positions, in clear and distinct propositions, he involves them in such cumbrous explanations, and suggestions, and reasonings, sometimes apparently inconsistent with each other, that there is occasion often, in interpreting his language, to resort to comparisons of different passages and to the general current of thought, and then by inference arrive at his meaning. Such being the fact, it is not easy in all cases to avoid mistake. The following, however, are believed to be the leading doctrines of the Essay on Native Depravity.

1. The depravity of which he treats relates to man's moral character, and means the same as sinfulness.

2. It is an innate, hereditary disposition or propensity to sin, consisting in a want of conformity

* It is proper to remark that considerable matter was added to the work, after the prize was awarded.

to the divine law; it is in itself sinful, and the cause of all actual transgression.

3. It is predicable of all the descendants of Adam at the moment of their birth, and is the ground of their being justly treated by God as sinners.

The first of these specifications is the substance of his definition, (p. 54,) and needs no particular notice. The other two will require some remarks, by way of explanation and proof. To the question, is depravity propagated? Dr. Woods answers, (p. 207,) "human beings are propagated, and are propagated as they are, fallen, corrupt." "Adam begat a son in his own likeness." "This includes the whole doctrine, if likeness includes, as undoubtedly it does, likeness in regard to moral disposition and character." Now, as Adam was an actual transgressor of the law of God, and had in consequence a sinful moral character, Dr. Woods, it would seem, must mean that mankind come into the world transgressors of the law of God, and have in consequence a sinful moral character. This view of his meaning is confirmed by what he says in other passages. He says, (p. 144,) "the fact is, that moral good and evil, virtue and vice, lie *in the affections* or *mental acts* themselves, considered in their own nature. It were easy to prove that this is the case, and that on any other principle, there can be no such thing as virtue or vice, holiness or

sin, in the universe." Again, (p. 135,) "sin is not the product or effect of wrong exercises of mind, but lies in them; they themselves are sin." In these passages he evidently teaches, that sin consists in wrong moral affections and exercises. And what are these but *acts of the will?* What, but transgressions of the law of God? That he considers this state in which mankind are born itself sinful, appears from the following considerations. He says, (p. 75,) "Adam's sin does not bring death and condemnation upon his posterity, *they themselves being sinless.* None of them suffer penal evil in consequence of his sin, *without being sinful themselves.*" He says also, (p. 77,) "we must conclude that among intelligent moral beings, sin is co-extensive with suffering." The inference therefore is, (and this he insists on as a ground of argument,) that as infants suffer and die as soon as born, they come into the world with a sinful, guilty character. Dr. Woods also in direct terms discards the idea that infants may suffer for the sin of Adam, without being guilty, by their own act. That sinful depravity or disposition with which mankind are born, he considers the cause of all actual sin. He speaks of "a period of life which precedes any sinful exercises," and of a disposition the nature of which is determined from the nature of the exercises and actions to which it leads. He speaks too

of the absurdity of regarding a propensity or disposition, as not partaking of the same moral quality with the transgression to which it leads; and of the necessity of ascribing the universal sinfulness of man to an adequate cause. Hence, it is evident that he regards, what he calls the moral likeness or disposition with which mankind are born, as the cause of all their subsequent acts of transgression.

More need hardly be said, to evince that the third proposition correctly exhibits the doctrine of the essay. This follows from what has already been said. But a single quotation may not be amiss. Dr. Woods inquires, (p. 204,) "whether the posterity of Adam, by a special divine constitution, are, in consequence of his fall, born in a state of moral depravity leading to certain ruin; or, according to the common law of descent, are partakers of a corrupt nature, the offspring being like the parent; and whether suffering and death come upon them not as personally innocent and pure, but as depraved and sinful beings. The affirmative answer to this inquiry he regards as the orthodox opinion, and he declares himself at a loss to know what the belief of those amounts to, who hold that mankind are depraved and ruined in consequence of Adam's sin, without coinciding in this view of native depravity. It would indeed be easy to interpret much of Dr. Woods' language, so as to make him teach

the doctrine of a depraved physical constitution, itself sinful and the cause of all sin; but when his letters to Dr. Ware are considered, as well as his other writings, it is believed the view which is here given of his sentiments, is that which a candid and just interpretation demands. If so, he agrees with the New Haven divines, in making all sin consist in the transgression of known law, and in ascribing the occasion of the universal sinfulness of our race to their connection with Adam. He differs from them in respect to the *nature* of the cause in man, which lies at the foundation of the entire sinfulness of the race. He represents this as a propagated, guilty moral state or character. They regard it as consisting in a propensity to sin, not however in itself sinful or deserving of punishment, but such as in all cases determines mankind to sin in their first moral acts. He also differs from them in respect to the moment of time in which mankind become guilty or deserving of punishment for their sins. He maintains that they are guilty of sin the instant they are born. They maintain, that they sin as soon as they can sin, and that they no sooner sin, than they fall under condemnation as transgressors. Dr. Woods, therefore, is wiser in respect to the moral state of infants than the New Haven divines.

Sin evil and only evil.

Dr. Woods, in this essay, while meeting the objection that the doctrine of native depravity is inconsistent with the divine benevolence, reasons on the supposition that the permission of sin may be incidental to the best system possible to God. He says, (p. 128,) "clearly God is the guardian of the interests of that universe which he has created and which he has destined to exist forever; his benevolence will lead him to adopt those measures which he knows to be most beneficial to those great interests, though not beneficial in the highest conceivable degree to the interests of a particular part." "If the highest welfare of the whole intelligent creation through all ages to come requires an arrangement less favorable to some part of the creation, or, for the present, less favorable to the whole, than some other arrangement might be; that arrangement will certainly be chosen by a God of love." Man's sinfulness, in itself, he regards as altogether and in the highest degree undesirable and deplorable. It is only by being overruled by the Almighty Governor of the world, that it will be the occasion of promoting the blessedness of God's moral empire.

Such language, taken in its connection, clearly implies the possibility that God cannot prevent sin in his moral universe without diminishing its blessedness, and that sin itself is an evil which he abhors, and which he permits only because it is, in

respect to divine prevention, a necessary incident to the best moral empire; a thing which he so overrules that on the whole it results in his own glory and in good to the universe. If this is Dr. Woods' theory, how does he differ on this point from the New Haven divines? If in any thing, it must be in this single point. He perhaps would say, that a benevolent God chose the sin, which he regards "as altogether, and in the highest degree, undesirable and deplorable," for the sake of exhibiting his own perfections in bringing good out of evil; and this, when he could have created and governed a perfectly holy and happy universe, without sin. They would deny the truth of this position, and maintain that God may have permitted the existence of sin, because, though he regards it as altogether and in the highest degree undesirable and deplorable, he preferred its existence to the non-existence of the present system, which is the best possible to him.

The theological discussions, an account of which has now been given, were not confined to New England. They entered the Presbyterian church at the beginning, continued to awaken more and more interest in their progress, and in the end, combined with other causes, produced the explosion which has shaken the whole fabric of Presbyterianism in the United States. The rapidity with

which, if the testimony of Old School men may be credited, the views of the New Haven divines spread in that communion, can hardly be accounted for, without supposing some peculiar preparation of mind for their reception. The controversial writings of New England were, indeed, widely circulated amongst its ministers; its own publications more or less entered into the controversy; and some of high standing and influence in it, both clergy and laity, early favored these sentiments. By the Old School party, they were denounced and warmly opposed, and this had the effect to turn public attention to them, and magnify their importance. The judicial proceedings also, which have been assigned as one principal cause of the measures of the General Assembly of 1837, came in as a means of further enlisting the feelings of the christian community. These things exerted a combined influence, favorable to the spread of the theology of common sense and the bible. But all these considerations seem scarcely sufficient to account for the extensive prevalence, in so short a time, of views pronounced by many high in station and influence, to be heretical and dangerous. May there not have been a peculiar preparation of mind for such a result, occasioned by the benevolent operations of the day; by an increased attention to the word of God and less regard to technical theology;

in consequence of the great increase of biblical instruction; and by the revivals of the present century, which have turned the thoughts of ministers from theological systems to the practical truths of christianity, and to the best modes of explanation in order to vindicate the ways of God to man?

It seems proper, before concluding this chapter, to bestow a few passing remarks upon one publication, of a periodical character, which for a number of years was issued in New York, and proving unsalable, was gratuitously circulated among ministers. The work referred to is entitled "Views in Theology," and proceeded from Mr. David N. Lord, a merchant in New York, who was once a licensed preacher of the gospel. It is difficult to determine what amount of influence, if any, this periodical exerted upon the results of the controversy in question; but as its author afterwards became a leading patron of the party in Connecticut which opposed the New Haven divines, it is well just to show, what theological opinions he has, at different times, condemned and advocated. Mr. Lord first attacked the doctrine of physical depravity; arraigned the great body of divines, from John Calvin down to Dr. Griffin, as guilty of teaching this error; and himself advocated the sentiment, that nothing which pertains to the constitution of man, "constitutes a *tendency* to sin," or "forms

any more *certainty* or *probability* that he will exercise that species of actions which is *evil*, than that which is morally *excellent*."* He next condemned the doctrine, that "God prefers sin to holiness in its stead," and maintained the position, that God in all instances prefers that men should yield obedience, and that it is best that they should obey in the circumstances in which they act.†

Another subject that underwent his animadversion, was "the doctrines of the Princeton Theological Seminary, respecting creeds and confessions." Dr. Spring's Dissertation on the means of Regeneration also called forth an article, in which he charged the author and others with teaching, contrary to the doctrine of the word of God, that "the Holy Spirit regenerates the mind by an immediate or physical agency, wholly exclusive of the instrumentality of moral means."‡ In other articles, Edwards, the Christian Advocate, and the Biblical Repertory, were severally convicted of inculcating erroneous views on the subject of depravity, while the views of Professor Fitch on the same subject were highly applauded, and those of Dr. Taylor censured, only on the following grounds: that he attributes the cause of all sin to the nature of mankind, "in contradistinction to the moral influence

* No. I, p. 56. † No. II, p. 19. ‡ No. V, p. 7.

exerted on them," and maintains that no change in their appropriate circumstances will prevent their sinning; and that he represents that a disposition or bias to sin, exists in the nature of man antecedently to the commencement of his agency, which is the cause of his becoming a sinner. As Mr. Lord advanced in his "Views in Theology," he left Edwards, and Hopkins, and Dwight, and others, with their "physical depravity," and "sin the necessary means of the greatest good," and commenced, with great violence, a warfare against Dr. Taylor and the writers in the Christian Spectator, who happened to go counter to some of his own opinions. They stood the shock, silent and unresisting; and the assailant, in due time, appeared in the ranks of their opponents in Connecticut.

There is yet another fact, of some weight, as connected with the causes of the revolutionary movements in the Presbyterian church, and with topics soon to be brought into view, which having remained unnoticed, may properly be referred to in this place. The controversy between the Rev. Asahel Nettleton and the Rev. Charles G. Finney, in regard to new measures, will be recollected by all. Much feeling was elicited at the time, and afterwards, "new measures" became a kind of watchword with a certain class of men in New England. The stigma of "new measure men," was attempted to be fixed

upon those who would not come out and publicly condemn Mr. Finney, and take sides in the controversy against him. As Dr. Taylor and his friends did not care to do this, in a body, they were represented as "new measure men," and pains were taken to identify them with Mr. Finney and his supporters in the Presbyterian church. A potent charm for some minds was found to exist in the sound of words, to bring about a union between the opposers of New Haven and the opposers of what were called "new measures" in the west. Changes were rung on "New Haven theology," "Finneyism," "new measures," and "spurious revivals," till, by the laws of mental association, many believed merely because they had heard it so often with the hearing of the ear, what was destitute of all evidence. How much effect was produced in the south with these magic words, by the professor elect, who was at first engaged in the controversy on the subject, in his long and mysterious journeyings in that land of promise, it may now be difficult to determine.

# CHAPTER XX.

## MEASURES IN CONNECTICUT TO SUPPRESS NEW HAVEN VIEWS.

Meeting to organize a Doctrinal Tract Society.

The history of the doctrinal discussions in New England, in its general outlines, being concluded, it remains to give some account of the measures adopted in Connecticut, by the opposers of what has been called "New Haven Theology," for the purpose of arresting the progress of reputed error. It will be necessary in doing this, to go back in the order of time to the 12th of October, 1831, when a select meeting of invited ministers was held at Norwich, with the professed design of organizing a Doctrinal Tract Society, to act in defense of the so called orthodoxy of the state. The place of this meeting was but half a mile distant from that in which the Consociation of New London county held its session, which was adjourned at noon of the same day; and yet so profound was the secrecy observed respecting the whole movement, that more than two months elapsed before the uninitiated members of the Consociation, were apprized of the fact that such a meeting was held; and then it was

disclosed only through the inadvertence of one who attended it. The result of this meeting was the organization of the contemplated society, and the adoption of a constitution, one article of which was, that all members, in future admitted, should be nominated by a committee and elected by the society. From the consultations and measures of this meeting originated a new publication, called the Evangelical Magazine, which was commenced in July, 1832. The object of this periodical, which was continued four years, and then superseded by the Hartford Watchman, though not highly belligerent in its character, was to oppose the views of the New Haven divines, and advocate the sentiments of their opponents. It reviewed, with unqualified approbation, the essays of Dr. Spring and Dr. Woods on native depravity, and contended for sinful depravity from the moment of birth. It also reviewed with like approbation the letters of Dr. Lee, and the work of Dr. Griffin on Divine Efficiency. On the permission of sin, it supported the views of Dr. Tyler and Dr. Woods, in opposition to the theory which they attributed to the New Haven divines.

The same year, "Letters on the present state and probable results of Theological speculations in Connecticut," by one styling himself an Edwardean, made their appearance. This pamphlet, with

another that followed it the next year, styled, "An Address to the Congregational Churches in Connecticut, by an Observer," have been commonly, and no doubt correctly, ascribed to Dr. Harvey, the present Editor of the Hartford Watchman, who published in his paper of June 24th, 1837, that the former "pamphlet was read in manuscript to a meeting of some eight or ten leading orthodox ministers of Connecticut, and by them unanimously approved, before its publication;" and that both "were published by the express approbation of leading orthodox ministers of that State." Whoever these "leading orthodox ministers" were, it is now too late to expect that they will claim the honor of giving counsel in this matter. The Letters of "An Edwardean," want even the name of the printer, and of the place of publication. In this pamphlet, it was proclaimed to the world in unqualified terms, "that Dr. Taylor and others were verging to Pelagianism," and that "the system advocated by him is Arminian in its tendencies, and decidedly Arminian, in all who come under its influence." The establishment of the Theological department of Yale College, was ascribed to a design to propagate heretical opinions; and it was attempted to cast on the Professor of Didactic Theology, the odium of disturbing the peace and harmony of the churches. It was predicted, that if our theological affairs go

on as they have for ten years past, Congregationalism in Connecticut will be rent in twain, no more to be united; and that the question, who will abide by the faith of their fathers, must be decided by a separation from all who seek its subversion. "Nothing," says the writer, "can be more certain than a separation of the Congregational churches of Connecticut, if the present state of things continues much longer. This is unavoidable, if the friends of Dr. Taylor insist on obtruding upon us, him and his doctrines. Acquiescence in his theology is utterly out of the question, and the crisis is rapidly approaching, when there will be a final division of the churches and ecclesiastical bodies in this State. And if Yale College continues to be environed with this influence, the friends of sound doctrine in the State, will soon seek other seminaries for their children, and Yale will become in Connecticut what Harvard is in Massachusetts."* This pamphlet, with all its misrepresentations of the views of Dr. Taylor and his friends, and with all its bitterness and denunciation, was not without effect. It increased jealousies and suspicions at home, and gave currency abroad, to the widely circulated rumors of heresy, and an extensive and lamentable defection among the ministers and churches of Connecticut.

* Page 41.

Though it was without any responsible name, and none except those in the secret could tell whence it issued, yet it was adduced in a far distant church judicatory, as evidence against a distinguished minister, whose character it aspersed.

A second meeting of the self-styled orthodox was convened in Hartford on the 8th of January, 1833, by letters missive of several months' previous date, signed by the Rev. Joseph Harvey, who was "instructed to inform" of their appointment, those whose "attendance was requested." The meeting was composed of "a representation from each district association in the State," selected by the leaders of the party concerned, and the object was stated by Mr. Harvey to be, "to consult on measures which it may be proper and necessary to adopt, in the present posture of our theological concerns." The measures here concerted "for the defense of truth and the suppression of heresy," were the adoption of a creed, and the appointment of a committee in each of the district Associations, to obtain signatures to it, with the design of organizing what was called a district Pastoral Union, within the limits of each Association. These were to compose, when properly organized, a Pastoral Union for the State. This plan, however, it is believed, proved a failure, as the contemplated Union was not organized till several months afterwards, and

in a different manner. Of these proceedings, the great body of ministers in Connecticut were kept, as much as possible, in ignorance; and matters were secretly concocted for a meeting of ministers to consider the subject of establishing a new theological institution in Connecticut. When the business was duly prepared, this *exparte* convention assembled at East Windsor, on the 10th of September, 1833; and so covertly was the plan concerted and the arrangements made for the meeting, that very few, except those to whom the subject was confided, knew that such a thing was projected. Even the pastor of one of the Congregational churches in the town in which the convention was held, gained the first knowledge of it, by incidentally passing the place of its session. Not a minister, friendly to the New Haven views, and able to state and defend them, was on the ground; nor is it known that such a one received an invitation to attend. Many of the men who were there, had had their feelings strongly enlisted in the controversy, and none, in the circumstances in which they were then assembled, were in a state of mind to take a candid and impartial view of things. Their proceedings of course, though undertaken no doubt with a deep religious solemnity, were such as, in other circumstances, would have presented to them a very different aspect. The meeting re-

sulted in an organization, called the Pastoral Union, to which members were to be added only by election; and the appointment of a Board of Trustees, for the purpose of establishing a new theological institution. Such was the origin of the East Windsor Institute, over which Dr. Tyler was called to preside, and to fill the chair of Professor of Christian Theology.

Simultaneously with the convention at E. Windsor, "The Address to the Congregational Churches of Connecticut," sprung armed into being, out of the brain of the same parent whose legitimate offspring has just been contemplated, in "The Letters by an Edwardean." These two productions were *par nobile sororum*, though the younger much exceeded the elder, in its boldness of attack and reckless disregard of consequences. In this the writer assumed a still more undaunted tone, and called more loudly than in the first, for a separation of the churches. He not only set forth the "new divinity" in a most alarming attitude, but threw upon those who favored it, the responsibility of "new measures," spurious revivals, and a train of evil consequences, that threatened moral desolation to the land. He threw out the insinuation of artifice and dishonesty, against the advocates of the New Haven sentiments; censured the churches for their apathy on the subject of the alledged errors; and called

on the professors in Yale College, who entertained these views, to resign their places. He, indeed, denounced the College, and attempted to dissuade parents from sending their sons for education to that institution. He advised the churches no longer to depend on its theological department for a supply of pastors, and urged an entire and immediate separation of all the "orthodox," from "those infected with new divinity and new measures." This pamphlet found few in Connecticut, whose jealousy and party zeal ran high enough to give it countenance. Men of moderation and candor generally, regarded it with disapprobation. It was considered as evidence of a design, on the part of some, to rend the churches asunder. It thus brought up the momentous question, What is the value of the union? and excited the feeling, It is best to stop and consider consequences. Reflection, once awakened, performed its office, and inclined the great body of ministers to forbearance and peace. Thus the object of the pamphlet was in a great measure defeated.

On the 13th of May, 1834, the corner stone of the building for the Seminary at East Windsor was laid, and the president and professor of ecclesiastical history were inducted into office. The inaugural address of the President, and the other addresses on the occasion, contained allusions to the reputed errors of New Haven, as the ground of es-

tablishing the Institute. "That the speculations to which I have alluded," says Dr. Tyler, "are of dangerous tendency, is our honest belief. It is our solemn conviction, that they tend to sap the foundation of the gospel, and that if not checked in their progress, they will lead to fundamental error. In this we may be deceived; but while these are our convictions, we cannot but regard with deep concern, the efforts which are made to disseminate these views; nor can we with a good conscience lend our influence to promote their dissemination."*

An important step had now been taken by Dr. Tyler and his party in Connecticut. The Rubicon was passed, and the friends of the new Seminary were committed before the public, to sustain their cause. Numbers were already enlisted on their side in New England, and from various causes, some in the Presbyterian church were strongly enlisted in their favor. In the city of New York, they found a number of influential supporters and liberal patrons, without whose aid their project would probably never have been undertaken; or if attempted, would have failed of being accomplished. Among these were Dr. Spring, who had himself been engaged to some extent in the controversy; some members of his church; and especially, Mr. David N. Lord, who

* Inaugural Address, page 20.

in his "Views of Theology," had at first fought so hard against some of the very doctrines which were controverted by Dr. Taylor, and which brought the East Windsor Institute into existence. By various means, considerable impression was made in that city, in favor of the new Seminary. From different sources, sufficient patronage was received to encourage the trustees to prosecute the enterprise, and in May, 1834, the Institute nominally went into operation. In May, 1835, the trustees reported sixteen students; and the number on the catalogue has since been increased to thirty-six. In May, 1837, the trustees reported the sum of thirty-one thousand seven hundred dollars, contributed in money to the funds of the Institution; besides donations to the library, and articles of furniture and clothing for the use of the students.

This sum has been gathered from numerous churches and individuals, and contains the widow's mite of twenty-five cents, as well as the contributions of the more wealthy. Whether it has been expended in the best manner possible for the glory of God, and the good of mankind; and whether the talents and energies of the men, who compose the faculty of the institution, and of others whose labors are devoted in different ways to the same general cause, are employed in a manner to advance, in the highest possible degree, the kingdom of Christ,

are questions which different individuals, at the present time, will decide differently; but they will be correctly decided at the judgment of the great day. That the East Windsor Institute was needed, for increasing the facilities of theological education, with Bangor, and Andover, and New Haven, and Princeton, and Auburn in view, it is difficult to believe; and that the cause of truth demanded it, will not, it is presumed, be the judgment of posterity. That those who established it regarded the measure as "the necessary means of the greatest good," cannot be questioned; and those who regard it as an "evil all things considered," can yet unite with them in praying, "that God will overrule it for his own glory," and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

In April, 1834, Rev. Daniel Dow and Rev. Abel McEwen, members of the corporation of Yale College, attended as a committee appointed for this purpose, the examination of the students in the theological department. Mr. McEwen prepared and signed a report to the corporation, which met in the succeeding August, commending in general terms the examination which he had witnessed. In this Mr. Dow refused to concur, and presented a separate report to the corporation, in which he expressed his cheerful concurrence with the statements of his colleague, in part; but said, "it appeared, that in

the branches of moral philosophy and theology, the doctrines which are taught and inculcated in this department are not in accordance with the articles of faith on which this College was founded, and are equally repugnant to the Holy Scriptures. To understand what the objectionable sentiments are, reference may be had to what the professors have publicly preached, and also exhibited in the volumes of the Christian Spectator."

On the presentation of this report, the corporation appointed a committee to inquire into the usage of the institution respecting assent to articles of faith; and invited the professors of the theological department to a conference on the subject thus brought before them. At this conference, the Dwight Professor of Theology, against whom the charges were particularly directed, exhibited his views at large on various points of doctrine, and made a statement respecting an assent to articles of faith in the institution. The committee appointed by the trustees also made report, confirming the statement of Dr. Taylor; and from these two documents the following facts are gathered. An assent to a religious formulary in Yale College was first required in 1722, at which time the confession of faith in the Saybrook Platform was adopted, and the officers elect were required to give satisfactory evidence of their belief in the system of doctrine therein contained.

Usage of the College respecting assent to articles of Faith.

In 1753, owing to the religious controversies then existing in consequence of the preaching of Whitefield and others, the officers and trustees of the College were required to declare their belief in the Assembly's Catechism and Confession of Faith, *for all the sentiments therein contained.* In 1778, on the accession of President Stiles, who could not give his assent to the Saybrook Platform in the unqualified sense which the existing laws required, the form was changed, and he simply signed the following declaration: "I do hereby give my assent to the confession of faith and rules of ecclesiastical discipline, agreed upon by the churches of this state, in the year 1708."

This form of subscription, under the circumstances in which it was made, must be understood to be *for substance of doctrine* contained in the Platform. When Dr. Dwight came into office in 1795, after a free conference with the Corporation respecting his theological opinions, he gave the same assent, and always explained it to be for substance of doctrine. The Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology, in 1822, signed the declaration in the established sense, and also presented to the Corporation the following creed, which was accepted by them as showing, satisfactorily, his substantial agreement in doctrine, with the Saybrook Platform.

Dr. Taylor's creed, presented to the Corporation in 1822.

"I believe in one only living and true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, power, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; that it is the duty of all his intelligent creatures to worship him in spirit and in truth; that he created all things; that he preserves and governs all his creatures, and overrules all their actions for his own glory; and that while all the actions of men, with all the events of his providence, ultimately subserve his wise designs, man is a free agent, and justly accountable for all his actions.

"I believe, that God created man upright, that our first parents freely sinned and fell, and that all their posterity come into the world in such a state, that without the renewing grace of God, they continually sin in all their moral actions, and are justly exposed to all the miseries of this life, and to endless punishment in the world to come.

"I believe, that God in his mercy has not left all mankind to perish forever, but out of his mere good pleasure has chosen some to everlasting life; and that he will deliver them from sin and misery, and bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.

"I believe, that the only Redeemer of men, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God and man, and

Dr. Taylor's creed, presented to the Corporation in 1822.

that in our nature he suffered and died on the cross; that he arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for them that believe; that he alone has made atonement for sin, and that without an interest in that atonement, there is no salvation.

"I believe, that without a change of heart, wrought by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who is God, no one can be an heir of eternal life; and that the soul that is once made partaker of his renewing grace, will never be permitted so to fall away as finally to perish.

"I believe, that there will be a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and a general judgment, at which all the righteous shall be admitted to everlasting happiness, and all the wicked sentenced to misery without end.

"I believe, that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments of the New Testament.

"I believe, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are given by inspiration of God, and are the sufficient and only rule of faith and practice."

The committee, after exhibiting the usage on this subject, say "We come then to the conclusion, as one most entirely warranted by the archives of this institution, that, excepting the period from 1753 to 1758, it has been an established principle,

that the assent to the Confession of Faith in question, is to be understood as only an assent to 'the substance of doctrine therein contained.' This principle was avowed in the churches of New England, so early as 1637, by the framers of the Cambridge Platform; the same principle is now adopted throughout the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, in this and in other countries; and on no other principle do we believe, that any single formula of human devise and of considerable extent, could be adopted by any large number of men and for any long period of time."

The corporation unanimously insisted, that Mr. Dow "be regarded as an accuser of the Professor of Didactic Theology, and proceed to support the charges against him contained in his report, unless the report be withdrawn. Mr. Dow urged a delay for a year, that he might prepare and substantiate his charges. Every facility and assistance requisite to proceed immediately, if he was so disposed, were offered him; and the corporation "voted, That Mr. Dow be requested to inform the board, whether he intended to prepare charges against Dr. Taylor, as contained in his report, or whether he voluntarily withdraws the report, and is satisfied that there is no foundation for those charges, or for any other, going to disqualify him for his place as Professor of Didactic Theology." Mr. Dow replied to this vote

as follows: "I withdraw the report which I laid before the corporation; and would further state, that on the ground of explanations given by the corporation of what subscriptions to articles of faith the laws of college require, no charges are preferred against the Didactic Professor." Mr. Dow published in the Connecticut Observer, an explanation, in which he designed to vindicate his course on this subject, and soon after gave to the public his pamphlet, entitled "New Haven Theology, *alias* Taylorism, *alias* NEOLOGY," consisting of garbled extracts from different writers of the New Haven views, interlarded with his own expositions of their sentiments.*

After these proceedings in the corporation of Yale College, the professors of the theological department laid out the result before the public. In their "statement," they express their full and unqualified belief of the following doctrines.

"The entire depravity and ruin of mankind by nature as the result of the sin of Adam;—

Justification by faith through the atonement of Christ to the exclusion of all merit in the recipient;—

The necessity of regeneration by the special or distinguishing influences of the Holy Spirit;—

* Mr. Dow is a member of the board of trustees of the Theological Institute.

The eternal and personal election of a part of our race to holiness and salvation;—and

The final perseverance of all who are thus chosen unto eternal life." The professors then say, that these, taken in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity; of the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent; and of the divine decrees and election, constitute the primary doctrines of the reformation, and that all of these doctrines receive their unqualified assent. Some of the secondary or explanatory doctrines, found in the writings of the reformers, are the following: The imputation of Adam's sin to all his descendants, in such a manner as to make them guilty and punished in the operation of strict justice on account of his act;—

The imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer, as the ground of his participating on the same principles of strict justice in the benefits of his death;—

The doctrine of particular redemption, or the limitation of the atonement to the elect;—

The doctrine of man's entire want of power to any but sinful actions, as accounting for his dependence on God for a change of heart, &c.

These secondary or explanatory doctrines have always been subjects of free discussion, among New England divines; and however strongly the feelings of those entertaining different views in respect

to them, have at times been engaged, they have yielded at last to sentiments of confidence and affection.

The professors then disclaim certain opinions which have been frequently charged upon them. They say,

"We do not maintain, nor do any of our sentiments imply the self-determining power of the will. We do maintain, however, that man is truly an agent, though not on that account the less dependent on his Maker; and we see no alternative but this doctrine, or Pantheism.

"We do not deny, but on the contrary maintain that there is a tendency to sin in the nature of man. We do not suppose it however to be a specific constitutional propensity like hunger or thirst; but as Edwards states, a general tendency to selfish and vicious indulgences."

"We do not maintain, (as injuriously charged,) that sin consists in a mere mistake as to the means of happiness, and that regeneration is the correction of that mistake. We hold that sin is seated, not in the understanding, but in the heart or will; and consists in voluntary opposition to God, and preference of inferior objects, in defiance of known interest and duty. And we maintain, that the change in regeneration is a radical change in the supreme *affections of the heart*, or *settled purpose* of the will,

which constitutes, we believe, what is meant by moral disposition."

"We do not hold that the Spirit in regeneration acts merely by presenting the truth; but we believe that he operates on the mind *itself*, in some unknown manner, though in perfect consistency with the moral nature of this change.

"We do not deny, but affirm, that God wills or purposes the existence of sin, and overrules moral evil for the advancement of his glory. We do indeed deny, (on the ground of his sincerity as a lawgiver,) that He ever prefers sin to holiness in its stead. We maintain therefore that in choosing the existence of sin he must do it in preference to something else than holiness; and that this something else *may be* 'the non-existence of the best moral system.'

"We have never affirmed that God could not exclude sin from a moral universe. We have simply denied, that he decreed its existence, as essential to the perfection of our system;—or, as 'the necessary means of the greatest good.' When pressed with the inquiry, on what other ground he *could* have permitted it, we have stated as a *possible* supposition, that sin, (as to God's prevention,) *may* have been a necessary incident to the existence of a moral system."

They protest against the charge of error.

The professors moreover declared, that they felt themselves bound most solemnly to protest against the assumption, that the department under their care had become the seat of dangerous error; or that there was any cause, as had been alledged, on this ground, for the establishment of a second theological seminary. To such an assumption they opposed the decision of the President and Fellows of Yale College; and the decision of the very men who founded the new seminary, as given to the world in their own creed. This instrument contains not a single sentiment, to which they cannot give their full and cordial assent. It neither rejects nor censures one of those principles, which have been charged with a tendency to dangerous error, viz. that man is truly an *agent*, with power to the contrary in every act of choice; that he has natural susceptibilities, which capacitate him to be moved by the invitations of the gospel; that he is active, as well as acted upon, in regeneration; and that God must have decreed the existence of sin for some *other* reason, than his preferring it to holiness as a means of perfecting his universe. Had it been framed with the intention of excluding, as unessential, all the points so long in controversy, it could hardly have received a better form for the attainment of such an end.

The "statement" of the Professors of the Theological department of Yale College, called forth "An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Theological Institute of Connecticut," from the Trustees of that seminary. The document appeared in the Connecticut Courant, a political newspaper, published in the city of Hartford. The principal grounds of dissatisfaction with the theological department of Yale College, as stated by the Trustees, it is proper here to exhibit, accompanied by such explanations as the case requires.

"Many have been dissatisfied," say the Trustees, "that the Theological School at New Haven has no more connection with the ministers and churches of the State. Being an appendage of the College, it is under the entire control of the Corporation, a Board, which, as at present constituted, is deemed altogether unsuitable to be guardians of a theological seminary."

The theological department was founded with the advice of the General Association of Connecticut, and entirely in accordance with the design of the founders of Yale College, to provide the means of instruction for a succession of evangelical ministers. No one educated in the seminary can be licensed in this State to preach the gospel, without the approbation of one of the district Associations, or of a committee by them appointed; and no one

can be ordained as a pastor over any Congregational church, without the action of an ecclesiastical body, duly constituted for that purpose. It is, therefore, entirely in the power of the ministers of Connecticut, to sanction or condemn the doctrines taught in the seminary, and if they please, to withhold license from the students, and exclude them from the ministry. It is not known that any dissatisfaction exists in regard to the Theological Seminary at Andover, because it is no more connected with the ministers and churches of that State; and why should there be any more dissatisfaction with that at New Haven?

As to the qualifications of the Corporation of Yale College to be the guardians of a theological seminary, it is presumed that the clerical part are as enlightened and experienced, and as "orthodox" too, as any similar body that could be constituted. They consist of the President of the College, and ten Congregational ministers of Connecticut; and have power to fill their own vacancies. They thus constitute a permanent majority of the Board; while the other eight are ex-officio members, consisting of the governor, lieutenant governor, and six senators, who are annually chosen by the electors of the State. How such a Board is "altogether unsuitable to be the guardians of a theological seminary," it is not easy to perceive.

Grounds of dissatisfaction with the Theological Department.

"Another ground of dissatisfaction with the New Haven School, as at present organized," say the trustees, "is the want of sufficient security against the introduction of heresy. In regard to three of the theological professors, it is not known that they are required to give their assent to any confession of faith, or that the corporation are required, or even authorized, to remove them from office for any heretical opinions whatever." And the professor of didactic theology is only "required to declare his free assent to the confession of faith, and ecclesiastical discipline, agreed upon by the churches of the State in the year 1708."

Suppose no subscription to articles of faith, were required of any of the professors of the theological department of Yale College; would there not be other modes, by which the corporation could equally well satisfy themselves of their theological views? Could not Paul know, that Timothy and Titus were sound in the faith, without requiring their subscription to a creed? And cannot our associations and ecclesiastical councils know, that the candidates whom they license or ordain are sound, merely by their examination? Is not a free inquiry respecting doctrinal sentiments, orally conducted, in fact a much better method of ascertaining the views of any person in theology, than his formal assent to a written confession? Has experi-

ence proved, that a subscription to articles of faith is an antidote against heresy? But if the trustees of the East Windsor Institute were ignorant on the subject, is it not nevertheless true, that all the professors of the theological department are required to give their assent to the Saybrook Platform, in the same manner with President Dwight? And as it regards the power of the corporation to remove them from office, why did the trustees say, that it is not known that the corporation are required or were authorized to do it? Before making such a statement to the public, they certainly should have informed themselves on the subject. A little inquiry would have satisfied them, that the corporation have unlimited power over the officers of the institution, and can, by a simple vote, remove any one of them from his place, even without a charge of heresy or incompetency. The officer removed could have no other redress, than what would be awarded by a court of law, as pecuniary damages for the injury received.

"The theological views maintained by the professors," say the trustees, "have given great and extensive dissatisfaction. *In the first place*, they have advanced positions which seem to us to subvert the doctrine of divine decrees. They maintain that God prefers, *all things considered*, holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place; and

that sin is suffered to exist, because God could not entirely prevent its existence in a moral system."

"Again, the professors maintain, that mankind come into the world with the same nature in kind, as that with which Adam was created; and that the only reason that the posterity of Adam do not exhibit the same moral character which Adam exhibited, is not that they have a different nature, but that they are placed in different circumstances."

"Again, the professors maintain, that self-love or the desire of happiness, is the grand principle by which all moral beings, whether sinful or holy, are actuated."

"They maintain, also, that antecedent to regeneration, the selfish principle is suspended in the sinner's heart, and that prompted by self-love, he uses the means of regeneration with motives which are neither sinful nor holy."

They have also "advanced principles, which seem to us to subvert the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. They say, free moral agents can do wrong under all possible preventing influence; and how can it be proved that a thing will not be, when for aught that appears it may be?"

The trustees however say, "we wish it to be distinctly understood, that we do not charge the professors of admitting the consequences which we have deduced from their principles; but we cannot

conceal our solemn conviction, that the principles which they have advanced, do necessarily lead to those consequences; and that were *we* to adopt them, we should feel ourselves compelled to renounce the distinguishing doctrines of the Calvinistic creed."

Another ground of dissatisfaction, say the trustees, "is the great importance which the professors have attached to their peculiar views, and the charges of dangerous error which they have brought against their brethren." They have charged their brethren with having advanced theories, which lead to the most shocking and blasphemous errors, and which, if carried out into their legitimate consequences, "lead to universalism, to infidelity and to atheism." These are the principal reasons which the trustees of the Theological Institute assign, for the establishment of a new seminary.

To the remarks of the New Haven Professors on their creed, the Trustees reply: "If they can *ex animo*, and without qualification or reservation, subscribe these articles; and if they intend to teach nothing inconsistent with them, we sincerely rejoice in the fact. But that they can subscribe them *consistently*, in the sense in which we receive them, and in the sense in which the language has heretofore been generally understood, we shall find it impossible to believe, till they have retracted some of their published statements, or explained them in

a manner more satisfactory than they have hitherto done."

The Professors of the Theological Department of Yale College published a second statement, in answer to this appeal.*

They express their astonishment at the manner in which the Trustees of the Institute have now come forward as a body, in their official capacity, to repeat the charges which had previously been made by the president, in his inaugural address, and by one of their number before the Corporation of Yale College. In their recent "Statement," they had declared their cordial concurrence in every sentiment expressed in the articles of the East Windsor Institute. Their declaration ought to have been satisfactory to the trustees, until they had fairly shewn that the published statements of the professors, were inconsistent with the articles of their own creed. This they had not attempted to do. They had hastily passed over the subject in a single sentence, that seemed to convey the insinuation that they were insincere, in making the solemn declaration which they had made before the world. "Such are the circumstances," say the

* The article appeared in the Connecticut Observer, the New Haven Religious Intelligencer, the New York Evangelist, and partly in the New York Observer, of the date of Nov. 29, 1834.

professors, "under which the trustees have sought to draw off public attention from our appeal to their creed, by an imposing array of *inferences* from our alledged principles; inferences which, they are compelled to acknowledge, form no part of our actual belief! But in doing this, have they stated our principles as *we* state them? Have they met those reasonings by which we claim to have set aside these inferences? Have they in short, come up to the question *at all*, in its present state? The farthest from it possible! They have gone back to the earliest stages of the controversy; retailed arguments which were answered years ago; made deductions from principles which we have repeatedly declared we never held; urged conclusions which *they* know *we* deny to be just, without ever hinting at the reasoning by which we claim to have set them aside, or attempting to meet it; and all this mass of obsolete argumentation, they have thrown out upon the public, not merely through the ordinary channels of religious intelligence, but in the columns of a political newspaper, to be read by thousands who know nothing of the controversy, and by them to be received as incontrovertible truth!"

The professors then reply to the charges brought against them by the trustees, by simply repeating the answers which had before been given to the same charges.

Their answer to the charge of subverting decrees.

They notice the charge of subverting the doctrine of decrees, somewhat in the following manner. The main argument used by the trustees in support of this charge is this. How is it possible for God to prefer, on *any* account, the existence of sin in any instance, if *all* things considered, that is, on *all* accounts, he prefers something else in its stead in *all* instances? Here the phrase, "*all things considered*," is taken in its widest application; whereas the professors expressly confined it to a single case, viz. where there is a choice simply between sin and holiness. This limitation the trustees suppress. They do the same with the phrase, all *instances* or cases, which was also limited to the single case of a choice between sin and holiness. Let the question be put with their limitation, how can God prefer the existence of sin in *any* instance, where (all things considered) he preferred holiness to sin, and the answer is: He can prefer the existence of sin as compared with some other thing than holiness, (suppose the non-existence of a moral system,) while yet he does not prefer it to holiness, when sin and holiness are the things compared. A man may prefer the loss of a limb, not for the sake of—but notwithstanding the pain which attends its amputation, and thus decide that the pain shall exist: and so God may have adopted our present system, not for the sake of—

but notwithstanding the sin which it contains, and in so doing purpose or decree that sin shall exist.

The Princeton professors and the great body of Calvinists in our country, reject the position that God, all things considered, prefers sin to holiness, and are therefore equally implicated in the charge of subverting the divine decrees. Even the President of the East Windsor Institute once declared, that God chose this system, "*notwithstanding* the evil which it contains."

In regard to the charge brought by the trustees respecting the nature with which mankind now come into the world, the professors in substance remark, that it applies equally to the President of the Institute as to them. By *nature* they mean the constitution or structure of the mind; and Dr. Tyler has expressly disclaimed the imputation of holding any change in this respect, as a consequence of the fall; "much less have I affirmed," he says, "that it is a physical change in the structure of the mind." The trustees have also attributed to them the sentiment, that the difference of character between Adam as he was created, and his posterity, is not owing to a difference in *nature*, but in circumstances; and this charge they have attempted to prove, by quoting a sentence which was professedly a statement of the consequences of one of Dr. Tyler's positions! The professors are very far from saying, that the sin of Adam had no more influence

on his descendants than that of any other parent. On the contrary, they hold, with Edwards, that as the direct result of Adam's sin, those lower appetites which were in man in innocence, being increased in strength, and unchecked by the higher principle of love to God, constitute a tendency to evil, which results in the entire depravity of man, from the very commencement of moral agency.

In regard to the charge, brought by the trustees against the professors, of setting aside the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, they reply substantially as follows: In the words of Dr. Dwight, "*dis*interested benevolence is not *un*interested benevolence." They hold with him that volition or choice is *ultimately* founded on a desire of happiness. In speaking of an *ultimate end*, they have intended an end not *external* to the mind, but that which lies deepest in the soul; the constitutional desire of happiness, which is entirely distinct from selfishness. How can there be an act of choice, without capacity for happiness in the agent, and an adaptation of the object chosen to satisfy the desire of happiness? Is holiness a cold discharge of duty which aims not at pleasure or satisfaction in the object on which it rests? Is there any thing selfish or unworthy, in seeking happiness in God, or in enjoying him?

In regard to the charge of making regeneration progressive,—the Professors say, "The trustees

might as well charge Dr. Brown with denying that *sight* is instantaneous, because he resolves it into successive acts, as to charge us with holding to progressive regeneration, because, in showing that this change is wrought, 'through the truth,' we analyzed it into acts following each other in *the order of nature;* though we distinctly said, not *of perceptible duration.*"

"The charge of subverting the doctrine of perseverance," say the professors, "is the most extraordinary of all; and is made out certainly by a most original mode of reasoning. We had said, that no proof can be derived by our opponents from *the nature of the case*, that a being who can sin, will not sin; and hence the trustees infer, that no proof on this point can be derived from *any other* quarter; not even from God's own declaration, that none of his children will utterly fall away!"

The professors declare their intention to enter into no further debate with the trustees of the East Windsor Institute. They resign all their share in this controversy into the hands of the Corporation of Yale College. And as they thus preclude themselves from making any comments on what may be said in reply to their remarks, they make one request of a just and enlightened public. It is, that they will steadfastly insist in their behalf, that whoever may come out against them, shall meet the issue as it is here stated.

How the issue should be stated.

"Have we been misrepresented in the manner here pointed out?"

"Has the President of the Institute abandoned the theory, that God chose our present system, in *any* sense *for the sake* of the evil which it contains?"

"Does he maintain, that the structure of the human soul is unchanged by the fall, and that there is nothing sinful in man, lying back of moral action?"

"Does an agreement in these respects, remove all grounds of difference as to the main points which have been so long in debate? To these questions we answer, YES. If any man shall hereafter attack us, let him answer, NO; and come forward with his proofs."

To this second "statement" of the professors of the theological department of Yale College, the trustees of the East Windsor Institute made no reply; nor did one appear from any other quarter. It seemed to be a general sentiment among the ministers of Connecticut, that it was time to end the controversy, by discontinuing the discussion. Measures were soon undertaken with the design of restoring mutual harmony and confidence, between those who differed in theological opinion. The basis of action on the subject, was an acknowledgment of the soundness of both parties, in respect to the essential doctrines of the gospel. The effect of the movement was happy. Excitement was by

degrees allayed, and the public mind was restored to its wonted calmness. The feeling prevailed, that peace and spiritual prosperity are better than contention and strife about unessential points of doctrine, which formed no part of the "faith once delivered to the saints," and respecting which, though of greater or less importance in explaining what has been delivered, Peter and Paul might differ, and still unitedly labor to fulfill the command of Christ, "go, preach the gospel to every creature."

With a few exceptions on the part of some violent or prejudiced men, the members of associations and ecclesiastical councils in Connecticut, had uniformly acted on the ground that no difference of sentiment existed, justifying division or alienation amongst ministers or churches. Few individuals, if any, were committed to an opposite course. The obstacles, therefore, to a restoration of confidence, were less, and the more easily removed; and for nearly three years, both ministers and churches have been approaching towards a state of perfect cordiality and affection. This, if not already attained, is so nearly accomplished, that nothing, it is believed, can prevent its final and speedy consummation. That charity which beareth all things and is kind, will forgive; and the love of Christ will prevail over all feelings of personal regard and private interest, which have too often had an undue share of influence in theological controversy.

# CHAPTER XXI.

## DR. TYLER'S LETTERS TO DR. WITHERSPOON.

Letters to Dr. Witherspoon.

ANOTHER movement, closely connected with the doings of the General Assembly of 1837, and with other parts of the history already written, must now be recorded,—a movement which has caused no inconsiderable sensation among the clergy of Connecticut, and has torn open, as may be feared, some wounds which were supposed to be healed.

On the 10th of February, 1837, the president of the Theological Institute, as it now appears, commenced a series of letters, addressed to the Rev. John Witherspoon, D. D., of South Carolina, which, with notes appended by him, were published anonymously in the Southern Christian Herald, under the title of "Letters on the origin and progress of Arminian Views in New England, from a distinguished New England Minister to one in the South." The whole series of letters consists of eighteen, the last of which bears date the 18th of May, 1837. These letters, as the Editor of the Herald informs the public, were copied into all the

The authorship of these letters how awarded.

Old School papers connected with the Presbyterian church. They were also published in the Hartford Watchman, and some months afterwards came forth from the press in a small volume, entitled, "Letters on the origin and progress of the New Haven Theology, from a New England Minister to one in the South."

The volume purports to be a history, the object of which "is to give a brief but faithful account of what has sometimes been denominated the New Haven Controversy." The authorship of the letters contained in this volume, caused considerable speculation in Connecticut, and though they contained many marks indicative of the general source from which they came, yet the individual who wrote them was not certainly ascertained, till his name was disclosed by Dr. Woods in a letter to Dr. Witherspoon, dated Aug. 23d, 1837, and published in the Southern Christian Herald. In this manner, the authorship was awarded to Dr. Tyler. To do complete justice to the Letters, would require more space than can be devoted to them on these pages; yet so directly are they connected with the subject under consideration, they must not be passed over entirely unnoticed. The history of the controversy already given must serve, however, in part, as a comment upon them.

Are they a true history?

The volume may be considered in two parts, the former of which professes to give an account of "the New Haven Controversy," and the latter, to shew the points of difference between the New Haven divines and other theological writers. It has been claimed by the author of these letters and his friends, that the history which they profess to give is impartial and true. They are even endorsed by Dr. Woods, as being "written ably and justly." Others regard them as grossly misrepresenting the whole subject, and as being calculated to mislead those who are not entirely familiar with it. It is proper, therefore, to examine their character. To the question, do the letters contain a correct account of the controversy whose history they profess to give;—no other answer than a negative one can be returned. Whatever may be the belief of Dr. Tyler or of any other person,—to the simple question of their correctness or incorrectness, there is but one answer. The impression which they are calculated to leave on the mind of a reader who is possessed of no other information, is palpably incorrect. Some proof of this will now be exhibited.

In the first place, great errors are committed in the statement of the doctrines of the New Haven divines. The following examples will serve as specimens. Dr. Tyler says, (p. 120,) the New Haven divines have maintained, that God has not a

complete control over the moral universe, and that sin exists because God cannot prevent it in a moral system. The quotations which he gives from the Christian Spectator, and from the Concio ad Clerum, in support of these statements, correctly interpreted, convey no such ideas; and no passages, it is believed, can be adduced from the writings of Dr. Taylor, or from the pages of the Spectator, to substantiate them. What more complete control can God exercise over the moral universe, than to have created, from all that were possible, just such a system as he pleased; and then to govern that system, just as from eternity he purposed to govern it, and so as to secure the results which he foresaw and predetermined? Can there be no complete control over moral agents, except by a physical or compulsory influence? What more complete control, than that which secures the exact accomplishment of all his providential purposes? Such positions the New Haven divines have uniformly maintained; and nowhere have they maintained, that sin exists, because God could not prevent it in any individual instance, nor because he has not decreed its existence. To demand the proof that God *could* have prevented all sin in a moral system, is a very different thing from affirming that he could *not* prevent it, or that he has not decreed its existence.

Their misrepresentations of doctrine.

Again, Dr. Tyler, (p. 132,) charges the New Haven divines with maintaining, that there is no hereditary corruption of nature which is transmitted from parent to child; that infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God, as brute animals; and that they are in no sense sinners. Now the New Haven divines have never denied, that there is a hereditary propensity to sin, or what they understand Dr. Tyler to mean by a hereditary corruption of nature, which is transmitted from parent to child. What they have denied on this subject is, that the ground or occasion of the universal sinfulness of mankind, which exists in the constitution of Adam's posterity, in consequence of their connection with him, *is itself sinful*. They, it will be remembered, make all sin consist in wrong moral action, and represent the nature of mankind to be such, that they will sin, and only sin, in all the appropriate circumstances of their being. Nor have they affirmed, that infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God as brute animals, nor, that they are not, in popular language, truly said to be sinners from the first, even as soon as they become moral agents. Nor can contrary inferences be drawn from a denial, that the death of infants is proof of their being *guilty* in the sight of God, or sinners in the sense of deserving punishment.

Their misrepresentations of doctrine.

Again, Dr. Tyler says, (p. 143,) the New Haven divines maintain, that antecedent to regeneration in the restricted sense, the selfish principle is suspended in the sinner's heart, and that he then ceases to sin and is in a state of neutrality; and he affirms that "thus they in fact represent regeneration as a progressive work." Now such statements of their doctrine on this subject, are very incorrect. They have never maintained that the sinner ceases to sin, till he gives his heart to God; nor that his character is for a moment neutral. Nor have they represented regeneration a progressive work, in any other sense, than that the term denotes a complex act, some parts of which, in the order of nature, though not of time, are previous to others.

Dr. Tyler also says, (p. 158,) according to the New Haven divines, every moral being makes his own happiness his ultimate end. They thus virtually destroy the radical distinction between holiness and sin, making them both proceed from the same principle of action. So, Dr. Taylor replies, it must be according to Dr. Tyler; for he maintains, that when man becomes holy he does so, to *gratify* a new created propensity to holiness; i. e. he becomes holy for the pleasure or *happiness* there is in being holy. The simple question on this subject is, can a moral being choose either God or the world as his portion, or act at all as a moral being, unless prompt-

ed to action by a desire of happiness; and if he cannot, then his moral character must consist in the *choice* or preference of his mind, and not in a *constitutional* desire of happiness. That Dr. Tyler, after all the discussion on this subject, should persist in charging the New Haven divines, with destroying the radical distinction between holiness and sin, is not easy to be explained.

Dr. Tyler represents, (p. 165,) that the great body of those who profess to adopt the sentiments of the New Haven divines, discard the doctrine of an immediate and direct agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. This certainly is a misrepresentation in regard to the ministers of New England; and if the doctrinal protest of the minority of the General Assembly of 1837 is any evidence, the same is true in respect to the Presbyterian church. Indeed, very few Congregational and Presbyterian divines of the present day, have even *explained* the mode of the Spirit's operations in a manner inconsistent with the doctrine of a direct and immediate agency on the mind.

Such are some of the misstatements contained in the letters of Dr. Tyler, of the doctrines of the New Haven divines.

There are also many statements in the book, made in language liable to be misunderstood by multitudes, for whose instruction the letters were

intended. This is illustrated in the following examples.

The New Haven divines maintain, says Dr. Tyler, that there is no natural or constitutional propensity to sin; that mankind come into the world with the same nature in kind, as that with which Adam was created; and that sinners may so resist the grace of God, as to render it impossible for God to convert them. Dr. Witherspoon and the members of the Philadelphia convention, would be led to conclude from these statements, that the New Haven divines deny all propensity or tendency to sin in mankind; that they consider the posterity of Adam, as coming into the world with a nature, *in all respects* the same, as that with which he was created; and that cases may occur in which sinners defeat the grace of God; whereas they are the farthest possible from adopting such sentiments. But the correctness of a writing depends not merely on the truth of each isolated statement. The omission of what is essential to the proper understanding of a subject, will propagate error with equal effect, as the insertion of what is not true. Such incorrectness abounds in the letters of Dr. Tyler. In his statements of the doctrines of the New Haven divines, he omits their qualifications and their explanations; and reiterates the charges which he had long before preferred, and which had been again and again refuted.

Their omissions.

His sixth letter consists almost exclusively of extracts from his own remarks on Dr. Taylor's letters to Dr. Hawes, without any account of the contents of it, except a sentence or two for the purpose of introducing his own comments. His seventh letter, on the other hand, consists of extracts from an article by Dr. Taylor, in which he examines the theories of Dr. Tyler in relation to the depravity of man, and the divine permission of sin. By the selection of certain parts, with the help of Dr. Porter's introductory condemnation of the article, Dr. Taylor is made to appear as "unmanly and of unchristian temper." The eighth letter is principally composed of extracts from Dr. Tyler's pamphlet, shewing in what points of doctrine he differed from Dr. Taylor, with such an introduction and peroration, as to make the latter appear in the absurd predicament of claiming an entire agreement with Dr. Tyler, and at the same time charging him with sentiments which lead to the very worst of heresies. In all these examples, there is great incorrectness of statement, resulting from the suppression of what was essential to a proper understanding of the subject. The book abounds with similar misrepresentations. Thus Dr. Taylor has in no instance charged Dr. Tyler with believing, or holding the revolting inferences, drawn from what Dr. Tyler does hold; but is careful to say, "we by

no means intimate that Dr. Tyler really embraces the conclusions, which we have deduced from his theories." Dr. Tyler should be the last to complain of the *reductio ad absurdum*. In this mode of reasoning, he commenced his attack on Dr. Taylor, and has pursued it to the last.

The letters are also calculated to give a false impression, in respect to the whole system of the New Haven divines. Ministers five hundred or a thousand miles distant, on reading them would very naturally conclude, that Dr. Taylor and his friends are Arminians, Pelagians, and Unitarians. The book begins with insinuations of this kind, which are rendered plausible by numerous quotations from the letters of theological partizans. I must proceed, says Dr. Tyler, to answer your inquiries respecting "the origin and progress of Arminian views in New England." I suppose you refer to the New Haven speculations. He says not a word to correct the false impression which the language of his correspondent is calculated to produce, but proceeds as though the inquiry was properly made. To keep up the impression, he quotes a passage from the late Dr. Porter of Andover, and introduces a doggerel rhyme, the purport of which is that Dr. Taylor was reviving Arminianism. In another place, he quotes from Dr. Fisk, of the Wesleyan University, to show that he claims an agreement with the New

Haven divines, and on the authority of Dr. Griffin, represents his claim as just. He also gives extracts from the writings of Noah Worcester, a Unitarian clergyman of Massachusetts, in which he approves of certain doctrines maintained by them, viz. "that sin is a voluntary transgression of a known law, that there is no such thing as a sinful nature antecedent to sinful volition, or moral action," and that sin may be incidental to the best moral system. Many other quotations might be noticed, apparently designed to impress the reader with the belief, that Dr. Taylor and his friends have exchanged Calvinism, for one or another system of error. Now was Dr. Tyler so ignorant of the quality of his own writings, that he was not aware what would be their effect; or did he intend to produce such impressions? If the latter supposition is true, why did he not come out with a bold and manly front in Connecticut, put his insinuations into the shape of charges, and meet Dr. Taylor face to face upon them, or at least make them under the signature of his own name? Such charges could not be substantiated, according to Dr. Tyler's own confession. See page 181.

The letters are calculated to mislead, in respect to the difference of sentiment between the New Haven divines and their brethren, both of a former period and the present day. Several letters are oc-

The false impression they give respecting difference of opinion.

cupied in shewing the difference of opinion between them and other writers in respect to the government of God over the universe; in regard to original sin and native depravity; in regard to regeneration, the influence of self-love, the mode of the Spirit's operations, and the doctrine of election. On all these important subjects, such sentiments are attributed to the New Haven divines, as they utterly discard, and such as the passages adduced as proof, by no means justify. Take, for example, the doctrine of election. Dr. Tyler would make it appear that they hold the Arminian doctrine on this subject, viz. that God eternally purposed to save those, who he foresaw would cease to resist his grace and submit to his authority, but did not purpose at all to make them holy. This, Dr. Taylor has expressly disclaimed; and the quotations from the review of Fisk on predestination and election, *if* they furnish any plausible support of the position, convey a different meaning detached, from what they do in their connection in the original article. The self-love also, which they regard as the primary cause of all moral action, is a very different thing from the selfishness so pointedly condemned under the name of self-love, by the writers whom Dr. Tyler quotes. Indeed, among the many passages which he has extracted from the writings of the standard divines of New England, to shew a differ-

ence of sentiments on the doctrines in question, there is hardly one to which the New Haven divines would not cheerfully subscribe.

Another thing ought to be noticed in estimating this work of Dr. Tyler's. Extracts are made from the private letters of some New England ministers, as though they expressed the present views and feelings of the writers; whereas these have materially changed within the six or seven years since the letters were written. Some have even apologized for the expressions which they had used in free correspondence, under a particular aspect of things, and which, without their consent, were published to the world.

But what is perhaps the most exceptionable of all is, that appeal to names which composes the chief argument of the book. To enumerate all, living and dead, titled and untitled, which appear on its pages, or to tell how many times each of them is made to speak his sentiments on different subjects, or with what language he clothes them, is not necessary. But, is it a correct mode of settling points of theology, and especially of metaphysics, to appeal to names, no matter how distinguished? Can the opinion of David Brainerd, Asahel Nettleton, Dr. Hyde, or even of Dr. Woods and Dr. Tyler himself, whose former writings compose so large a part of the letters to Dr. Witherspoon,

determine the question, whether man is a sinner from the instant he takes a breath of atmospheric air into his lungs; or for what reason God permits sin? Is the authority of Dr. John Pye Smith, sufficient to determine the validity of an argument, without examining more than one side; or that of Dr. Ebenezer Porter, whose praise is in all the churches, but who confessed himself completely non-plussed to see what Dr. Taylor would be at?

Such, in their general character, are believed to be the Letters on "New Haven Theology," written by Dr. Tyler, President of the Theological Institute of Connecticut. No other president or professor of a theological institution, it is presumed, ever has written, or under similar circumstances, ever will write another just such book. And why did Dr. Tyler write these letters to Dr. Witherspoon? Why did he attempt to write a history of events in which he was a principal actor? Was it because a person engaged for years in spirited if not prejudiced discussion, would be likely to be an impartial historian? And if he undertook to write at all, why did he not subscribe his own name and publish them in Connecticut? Perhaps it will be said, the letters were written at the request of Dr. Witherspoon. But the inquiry then arises, why did Dr. Tyler undertake to write a series of eighteen letters, when he admits that his corres-

pondent probably expected but one? And why should they be published in the Southern Christian Herald and copied into all the Old School Presbyterian papers, just previous to the meeting of the General Assembly of 1837? May not these questions be satisfactorily solved, on the supposition of an alliance of Old School leaders in Connecticut and in the Presbyterian church, on the ground, that "if one fails the other fails, and if one prospers the other prospers?" For whatever purpose they were written, there can be no doubt that they exerted a considerable influence in causing the violent proceedings of the Assembly, which immediately followed their publication. They assisted the members of the Philadelphia Convention to make out so accurate a list of errors, as to need, perhaps, no correction from their friends in New England. They emboldened the Assembly to adopt measures which could never have been carried, but for their belief in the existence of wide-spread and prevailing heresy in the Congregational churches. The impartial historian of future days, therefore, will award to Dr. Tyler the reputation of having done something to abrogate the Plan of Union, and occasion the catastrophe of the Presbyterian church.

# CHAPTER XXII.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS.

### The two points of inquiry.

THE preceding account of the late theological controversy in New England shews, that the two leading points of inquiry have been, *first*, what is the nature of sin; and *secondly*, for what reasons has it been permitted? In regard to the first point, the New Haven divines have uniformly maintained, that all sin consists in voluntary action, and that men are guilty and deserving of punishment, only as transgressors of known law. Dr. Harvey undertook to controvert this position, and at first maintained that there is in mankind, back of all moral action, a nature which is the cause of all actual transgression, and is itself sinful. He afterwards explained himself to mean, that this sinful nature is the voluntary state of the mind in which man is born, and is itself a transgression of the divine law. Dr. Tyler at first maintained, that there is in man a native propensity to evil propagated from parent to child, like other natural propensities. He afterwards explained himself to mean, that "this propensity is not in the structure of the mind," and

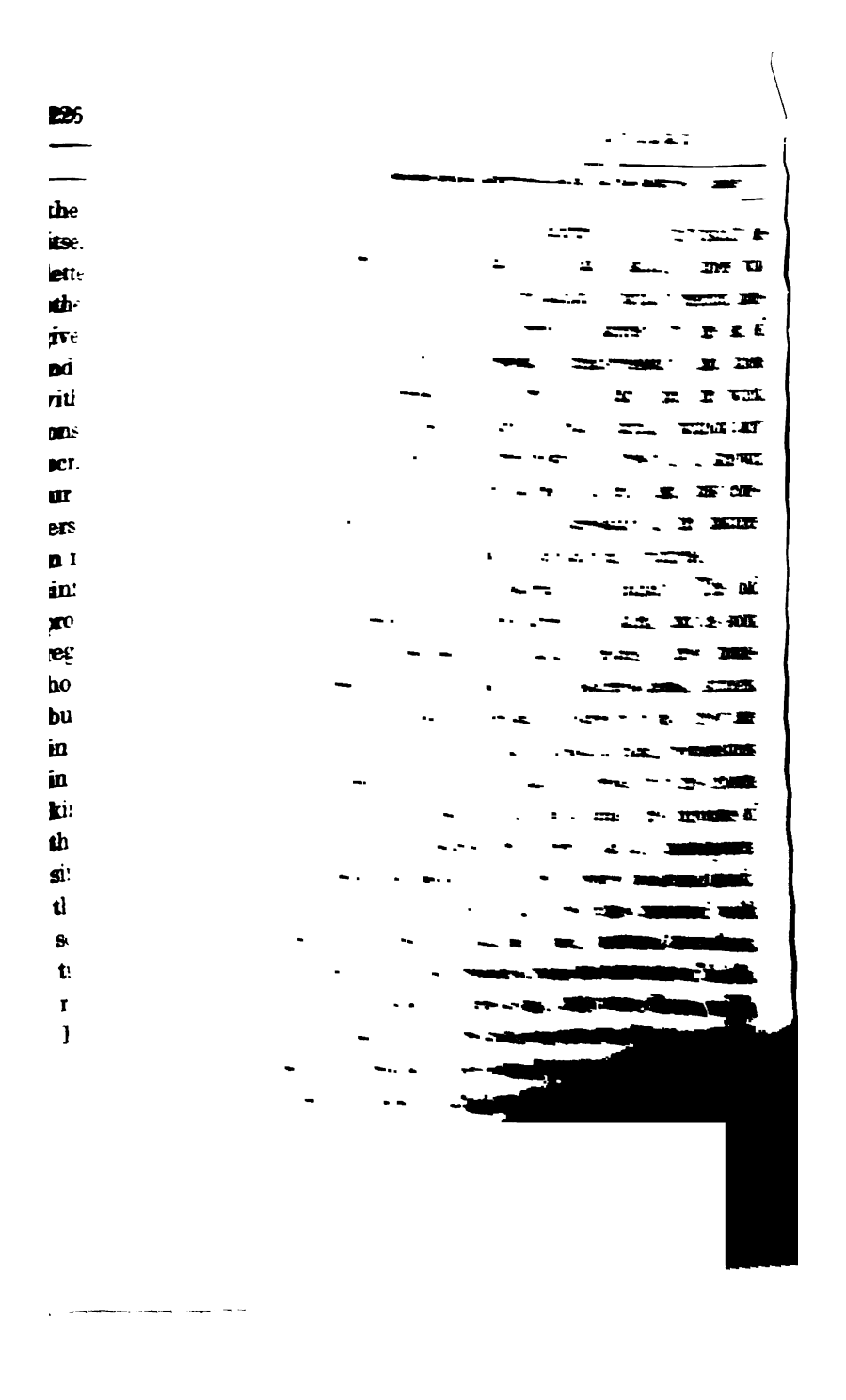
also to agree with Edwards, that mankind come into the world destitute of those superior principles with which Adam was created, and that this constitutes their propensity to sin. Dr. Spring maintained that all sin consists in voluntary action, and that mankind are born into the world with moral dispositions which are sinful, and an essential part of the soul's existence. Dr. Woods maintained, that mankind are "born in a state of moral depravity leading to certain ruin; or that according to the common laws of descent, they are partakers of a corrupt nature, the offspring being like the parent." This statement compared with what he had written in former years, ought not perhaps to be understood as asserting any thing contrary to the doctrine, "that all sin consists in voluntary action, and is a transgression of known law." This doctrine it is believed, the great body of New England divines at the present day fully adopt. So did Edwards and the old Calvinists. All who have ever held *literally*, "that in Adam's fall we sinned all," have maintained, in the language of the Westminster divines, "that we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression;" that is, *we* transgressed *in his act* the divine command, and are *guilty* of the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. The doctrine of the New Haven divines on this subject is denied only by three classes of theologians;

those who hold the doctrine of a physically depraved nature, which is itself sinful; those who adopt that view of imputation, which regards mankind as truly and properly sinners by the sin of Adam, without personal transgression; and those who maintain, that men are born into the world with a voluntary state of mind, which, without any acts of choice or preference in view of a known rule of duty, involves them in guilt and just condemnation. Out of the discussions on the nature of sin, sprung several subordinate inquiries.

1. What is the character of infants? The old divines said they are sinners in Adam, and as soon as they are capable of acting morally, they transgress the law of God, and become *actual* sinners. The believers in physical depravity say, they are born into the world, with constitutional propensities intrinsically sinful, and leading directly to the choice of forbidden objects; and that under the impulse of these sinful desires they crave sinful indulgence, in the same manner that they crave food and drink. Dr. Spring and others say, they are created with moral qualities no less than with natural faculties, and are actual transgressors from the instant of birth. The New Haven divines say, they are born with such a nature, that they sin as soon as they are capable of knowing right and wrong, which is at a very early period of life, and if not at its commence-

ment, the time intervening between birth and moral agency is so short, as to claim no special notice; in other words they sin as soon as they can sin, and it is not important to know the precise moment of their first sinful act. But how can infants be saved, it was asked, if they are not born into the world sinners? By the redemption of Jesus Christ, it was answered. If they die before actual transgression, they may through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, be saved from the consequences of belonging to a fallen race, and be made holy. Again it was asked, why do they die, if they are not sinners from their birth? Why do they die before they are born, it was asked in reply; and why do animals die? Death does not in all cases prove sin. Infants *may* die, because they belong to a race of beings who, in consequence of Adam's sin, are mortal.

2. Another question growing out of the discussion on the nature of sin was, if all sin consists in man's own act, what ground of certainty is there that all mankind will become sinners? To this it was replied: Adam was created a moral agent, and sinned through temptation presented to his natural appetites; and man, with the same powers and faculties, may do the same, even though there were no other occasion. But though the human soul has the same powers and faculties *in kind*, as Adam had in a state of innocency, yet, in consequence of



ment, the time intervening between birth and moral agency is so short, as to claim no special notice; in other words they sin as soon as they can sin, and it is not important to know the precise moment of their first sinful act. But how can infants be saved, it was asked, if they are not born into the world sinners? By the redemption of Jesus Christ, it was answered. If they die before actual transgression, they may through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, be saved from the consequences of belonging to a fallen race, and be made holy. Again it was asked, why do they die, if they are not sinners from their birth? Why do they die before they are born, it was asked in reply; and why do animals die? Death does not in all cases prove sin. Infants *may* die, because they belong to a race of beings who, in consequence of Adam's sin, are mortal.

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his fall, the inferior principles of our nature are much more susceptible to excitement from inferior objects, than in him; and this, as well as a constitutional propensity to sin for its own sake, may furnish the ground of certainty, that the first moral act of every individual of our race will be sinful. Indeed it is an intuitive truth, that the cause of *the first* sin in the human mind cannot itself be *sin*, nor possess any moral quality whatever.

3. Another question arising from the discussion on the nature of sin was, what is the nature of regeneration? Dr. Taylor and the New Haven divines said, that regeneration, when the term is used in its most restricted sense, to denote the change in man, is a moral act, consisting in a transfer of the supreme affections from the world to God. In a more general sense, it includes the intellectual perception and comparison of the two objects of preference, God and the world, which are necessary to the choice of God as the portion of the soul. The sinner uses the means of regeneration only in the indivisible moment, while he so compares and estimates the two objects, that his supreme affections are given to God. In doing this, the active love of the world is suspended, previous, in the order of time, to the act which in the most restricted sense constitutes regeneration. This change in man is wrought in him as a moral being, by the agency of the Holy Spirit operating on his mind.

No, says Dr. Tyler. This view of the subject is incorrect. Sinners never use the means of regeneration. The active love of the world is never suspended, till the heart is changed. If it were, the sinner would then be in a state of neutrality. If this is a true account of the subject, regeneration is a progressive change; is man's own work; and the Holy Spirit only applies the truth to the mind by way of moral suasion. Say the believers in physical depravity, God performs an act of creation in renewing the sinner, as much as when he brought the soul into existence. To consider the change in regeneration an act of the sinner, the mere choice of his mind, is to deny the necessity of the Spirit's operations, and is heretical. There must be an act of divine efficiency, in which God by his physical omnipotence changes the nature and constitution of the soul.

Thus the whole debate respecting the nature of sin, might be resolved into the question, what is a moral agent? Is he a being, capable of thinking, feeling and choosing? Is he endued with such faculties, that he is capable of knowing right and wrong, and choosing between them, i. e. of making either a right or wrong choice? Do all men, whether sinful or holy, as moral agents, have the same nature in kind, that is, are they created with the same natural faculties, irrespective of the manner

in which they afterwards use them? Is it the exerting of these faculties in wrong acts of choice or preference, with the knowledge that they are wrong, and with the power to do otherwise, that constitutes a moral agent a sinner? Is it the beginning to use these faculties aright, that constitutes his turning to God; in other words, is it the preferring of God to the world, the loving of him supremely, with the faculties which he has given, that constitutes the change in regeneration? and has a moral agent power in all circumstances, and under all influences, to choose right or wrong? Let these questions be answered in the affirmative, and let this view of moral agency be carried out into all its relations to the doctrines of the gospel; and physical depravity, and physical regeneration, and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, their acting in his act, and the modern dogma of created voluntary transgression in the state of the will with which mankind are born, can no longer have place among the doctrines of the church; much less, be set up as tests of orthodoxy.

The *second* point of inquiry in the late theological controversy was, for what reason was sin permitted?

That sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and that God prefers it on the whole to holi-

ness in its stead, says Dr. Taylor, are groundless assumptions. Dr. Woods and others say, that they do not pretend to tell the reasons why God decreed sin; yet they argue to prove that the present system is the best conceivable, and that the degree of sin that exists, is preferred by God as a means of the greatest good.

To furnish a resting place to the mind, and to meet the objections of the infidel, Dr. Taylor suggested the theory, that the reason of the divine permission of sin *may be*, that it is incidental, in respect to divine prevention, to the best system possible to God, and that he purposes it, not in preference to holiness in its stead, but in preference to the non-existence of the best system. Dr. Fitch advocated this view of the subject in an article in the Christian Spectator, in which he maintained, that the evils that exist in the moral universe may arise from the nature of the moral universe itself; and he adduced the probabilities in favor of such a supposition.* Such a theory, said their opponents, limits the power of God. It makes him desirous of preventing sin, but unable to prevent it. God has complete control over every creature, and can keep all his subjects from sinning, and bring all sinners to repentance. They go on to charge the

* Vol. iv. (Quarterly Series,) p. 614.

New Haven divines as teaching for truth, what they only suggested as a probable solution of a difficulty, and deduce many alarming consequences from their theory.

Out of this inquiry respecting the reasons of the permission of sin, sprung others.

1. One was, the same as that which lay at the foundation of the inquiry respecting the nature of sin, viz. what is the nature of a moral agent? He is one, say the New Haven divines, who has in all possible circumstances the power of choice. This definition, some thought, denied the power of God to control moral agents, overthrew the doctrine of irresistible grace, and made man independent of his Maker. Others said it was the old Arminian doctrine revived, of a self-determining power of the will.

2. Another question agitated was, in what manner does God govern a moral universe? Not by physical omnipotence, say the New Haven divines, but by an influence consistent with moral agency, leaving the mind free to act otherwise. This their opponents thought was the doctrine of moral suasion, and left it uncertain to the divine mind, whether he could keep any in holiness, or secure the perseverance of the saints.

3. Another inquiry was, is not God disappointed and unhappy in the results of his moral universe?

Some said he cannot do all the good he would, and must therefore be unhappy. Dr. Tyler said, He cannot accomplish his decrees and do all his pleasure. The New Haven divines said, He foresaw and purposed all things from eternity, and is not disappointed in the result, but infinitely blessed in his infinite beneficence; whilst he is indeed "grieved," with the transgression of his law, and desires that all sinners should come to repentance rather than continue in sin. Thus the theory suggested as a possible mode of accounting for the permission of sin, was carried out in the discussion, through the principal doctrines of the gospel, in a manner to awaken great alarm lest the whole fabric of Calvinism should be subverted. Inconsistencies were charged on the New Haven divines. It was asserted that they had departed from the standard theological writers of New England; and when they attempted to shew their agreement with them, in all the essential doctrines of the Calvinistic system, they were suspected of insincerity and accused of self-contradiction. They complained that they were misrepresented; but they were charged with unintelligibleness in their writings. They claimed that their opponents abandoned their original positions, and came to that ground on which there was a virtual agreement; and they were charged with departing from their own ground, or

with insincerity. Their doctrines were continually misstated; they were charged with errors which they solemnly disclaimed; they were branded with names of Arminian, Pelagian, and Unitarian, and ranked with those who had been foremost in opposition to "orthodoxy."

Under such circumstances, it is wonderful that the "New Haven speculations" have prevailed, in so short a time, to such an extent as to require for their suppression, a new theological institution in the state of Connecticut; the union of a party in New England with the Old School party in the Presbyterian church; and the revolutionary and violent proceedings of the majority of the General Assembly of 1837. Especially is it wonderful that such results should have taken place, from the discussion of the question, what is the nature of sin and why is it permitted, when all parties in the controversy are agreed, in all the important articles of the Calvinistic creed. Yet there can be no doubt, that even the measures of the memorable Assembly of 1837, owe their origin and result to the controversies in Connecticut, more than to any other single cause; and that they who formerly condemned Hopkinsianism, are now arranged in a party, which receives its chief countenance and sympathy in New England, from Hopkinsians of the highest school; while they whose heresy is an

object of alarm, agree much more nearly than their opponents, with the old Calvinists.* These wonders must be accounted for, in part, on the ground of the misapprehensions which prevail in a portion of the Presbyterian church, respecting the doctrines of the New Haven school. The removal of misapprehensions has greatly promoted harmony and confidence in New England, and will no doubt one day, do it in the Presbyterian church, whatever may be the issue of the present conflict.

If men of all parties would pause and with the humility of little children inquire what is truth, instead of asking who shall be greatest; if in all their theological differences they would be careful to ascertain the exact sentiments of those from whom they differ; and would acknowledge as truth, all that they regard as such, instead of setting themselves about convicting their opponents of heresy on trivial grounds; then theological controversy would not so often result in the alienation of the

* So far as "New Haven Theology" differs from the New England Theology, which Presbyterians used to call Hopkinsianism, it approaches towards old Calvinism. Hopkinsian disinterestedness,—God's efficiency in the production of sin,—concreated *actual* sin,—sin the necessary means,—on all these points the New Haven divines depart from Hopkins towards Calvin and the Westminster divines. The Hopkinsians say that infants suffer and die because of their own personal sin; New Haven and Princeton agree in saying that it is in consequence of Adam's sin.

parties, and in unhappy contentions and divisions in the churches. The ministers of Whitefield's day, in too many instances learned wisdom when it was too late to retrieve their errors; the churches of Connecticut have bought it at too high a price, in the experience which they have gained as the result of their late theological discussions; and there is great reason to apprehend, that such will unhappily be the result, in regard to the church which is now agitated with party strife and revolutionary movements. May God, in his providence, avert the final catastrophe of disunion.

Let the Congregational churches of New England, from the experience of the past, learn not to give countenance to rumors of heresy, in regard to those who hold and teach the great doctrines on which their faith is founded. Though some in the ministry, should charge their brethren with radical error, on the ground that their theories subvert the doctrines of grace; and should adduce arguments to prove that "certain speculations," if carried out into their legitimate consequences, would remove the ancient landmarks; let them not indulge suspicion, till they see some evidence of actual defection from the faith. Let them endeavor to discriminate between the real sentiments of the accused, and the interpretation and inferences of those who are enlisted in controversy. If "the speculations"

in question are too abstruse to be understood by them, though the doctrines are familiar which it is claimed they subvert; let them feel safe in the assurance, that heresy always relates to a denial of doctrines, and not to the mere philosophical theories which are adopted as modes of explanation.

Finally, let those who are young in the ministry, lay it down as a principle to be adhered to during their whole life, that they will receive truth from whatever source it may be derived, and however much at variance with pre-conceived opinions. Let them plant their feet upon that sure foundation of the prophets and apostles, the word of God, and attach no undue importance to creeds and confessions, and the commandments of men. Let them prove all things, hold fast that which is good, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but let them not imagine that all who differ from them, in philosophical opinions and theories, are heretical, or laboring to bring a flood of error upon the churches. Then may charity, and brotherly love, and confidence unite their hearts, and the kingdom of our Redeemer, through their instrumentality, be greatly advanced.

# APPENDIX.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

Sermon at the Ordination of Jared Sparks. By Wm. E. Channing. Baltimore, 1819, pp. 63.

Letters to Dr. Channing. By Moses Stuart. Andover, 1819, pp. 180.

Letters to Unitarians. By Leonard Woods.

Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists. By Henry Ware. Cambridge, 1820, pp. 150.

Reply to Dr. Ware. By Dr. Woods.

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